

DECEMBER, 1998

# HERMES

WESLEYAN'S MAGAZINE OF POLITICAL, CRITICAL, AND CREATIVE THOUGHT



**INSIDE:** Tracking, Vouchers, The Attack on CUNY, the Y2K Bug, Half-Naked Bikers, and much, much, more!



## Fighting for Women's Self-Defense

On October 30, 542 people joined Wesleyan's annual Take Back the Night March to share their stories of sexual assault or to support survivors. The night was filled with moments of both empowerment and despair. Cheers like "Wesleyan Unite! Take Back the Night" were heard, while in the speak-outs women (and a few men) described scenes of rape and other attacks of sexual violence. Many people left the march feeling confused or afraid; but one thing was clear—for many Wesleyan women, like for thousands of other women in the outside world, physical and mental abuse is a part of their lives they are constantly forced to face. Although Take Back the Night heightened sexual assault awareness, it still left the question of how women are supposed to combat this injustice unanswered.

In the past Wesleyan has partially answered this question by offering a self-defense class. However, this year the class never materialized because of organizational problems. Since the class is not offered for credit, a fee must be charged and a teacher independent of Wesleyan must instruct it. Irene Wilson, the woman who has taught the course in the past, agreed to teach it this year but couldn't

locate students to help organize the class for next semester. However, members of Wesleyan could help organize the course. And thus women's self-defense disappeared for the fall '98 semester.

Plans are now underway to rehabilitate the class for next semester. However, members of Wesleyan's Feminist Majority have decided that the class deserves a more permanent place on our campus; and the only way to get that is to include it in the course book. Normally, establishing a credited class is a lengthy process, unless Physical Education approves it for their department. Unfortunately Physical Education is reluctant to sponsor the class because of budget limitations. Since that route had led to a dead end, the next step was to appeal to President Bennet for support. Previous presidents have supplemented the course with their discretionary funds. Yet when questioned, Bennet was unwilling to temporarily reduce the costs of the class because he didn't see a future for it in the course book.

Bennet believes that instituting a credited women's self-defense class would make it appear as though Wesleyan students were in danger of being sexually assaulted on campus. Even if we could pretend that Wesleyan was a perfectly safe campus, free of sexual assault, we could not ignore that in this world a woman is raped every four minutes. Bennet claims that Wesleyan's role is only to educate its students in academic areas (with the exception of a limited number of physical education courses). And so once again the women's self-defense course has reached an impasse.

Although the class lacks the support of both Physical Education and our president, it will be offered next semester (for a fee). If you are interested in helping start the course or enrolling in it, then please try to attend the next Feminist Majority meeting on Monday night, at 10 p.m., in the campus center meeting rooms. Or you can contact Negar at X6232.

—Karen Weingarten

## HERMES

### PROCRASTINATES FOR FINALS

Nail Clipping	Sara Donnelly
Cooking	Daniele Anastasion
Eating	Jessica Fantz
Binging	Dan Dylan Young
Purging	Karen Weingarten
Smoking	Adam Hurter
Room Cleaning	Andrew Tipson
Masturbation	Tyler Cabot
Protesting	John Kamp
Oral Sex	Ben Oppenheim
Gas Huffing	Jeff Schwaber
Long-Distance Spitting	Noah Lansner
Cross-Dressing	Ben Abelson
Tunneling	Brian Edwards-Tiekert
Gossiping	Aongus Burke
Industrial Espionage	Olivia DeBree
Magazine Production	Bob the Cat

All opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Hermes staff.

## Why Hermes?

*Hermes* was founded in 1975 by a group of student activists upset with Wesleyan's school newspaper, the *Argus*. *Hermes* is named after the god who, according to Greek mythology, slew the hundred-eyed monster, *Argus*. These days we try to provide a more political, critical, and analytical outlet for Wesleyan students to express their opinions.

The staff of *Hermes* meets once a week, usually on Wednesdays at 9:30 PM in the WSA building (190 High St.). We are organized as a nonhierarchical collective, and work in an informal manner. Newcomers are welcome.

Cover Art by Hannah Nielsen-Jones

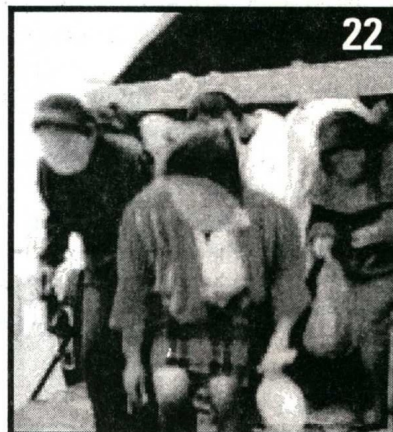
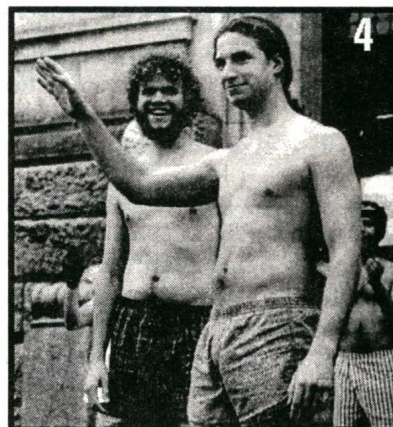


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# ← Fighting the cult of autocentricity ←

A day in the life of a SODD Not Bombs Operative

> By John Kamp

I arrived on two wheels at the WeShop parking lot. With me were a pen, paper, and a stopwatch. On me were a helmet, reflective sash, and leg clip. My mission: to track the on-campus drivers—how many, and where they come from.

4:22 p.m. Agent 7A reports to Weshop parking lot. The instructions given are to wait for OCD 1 (on-campus driver numero un).

4:23 still waiting.

4:23:30 Agent 7A spots OCD 1.

4:24 OCD 1 appears to be in too great a hurry for the dashing agent to pursue.

4:25 OCD 2 appears. Confirmed by anonymous source as In-town resident 009. Agent 7A spared perilous pursuit down Cross Street.

the moment. But trying will do.

4:28 Agent 7A waiting. Lot is full. Boy illegally parks.

4:29 OCD spotted. Green Saab. The agent dashing-ly adjusts reflective sash, turns on tail-light, and proceeds at gear 18 to follow OCD 2.

Maybe it's that we want to relive those vivid, concentrated moments of glee in high school, when we finally broke free from our bondage and passed the driver's exam.

It seems almost a rite of passage at this here school that moving up through the class ranks means not only a wave good-bye to Mocon, Foss Hill or the Butt, and a cheers to student groups and FYIs, but also a sizable bon voyage to one's own two feet.

"If only they would replace these sidewalks with people movers, then I would have you amputated," boy says to feet.

Maybe it's that we want to relive those vivid, concentrated moments of glee in high school, when we finally broke free from our bondage and passed the driver's exam (yah, for some students from our densest urban areas, this point is indeed irrelevant, but read on).

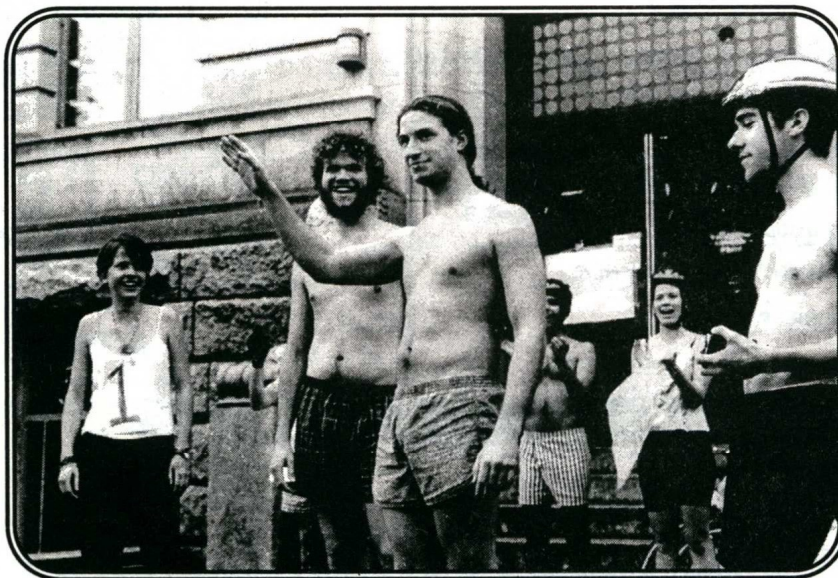
No more bus rides. No more bike rides. No more car rides from parent. Just pure freedom. How beautiful it was. So beautiful we probably can't recreate

Frosh indeed react incredulously when they are told upon WesArrival that, along with WESCREW, WESWOMEN, WESXC, WESJAC, WESTRAIGHT&PERSECUTED, and WEST-ONECOLDISOBER, there are also the WESONCAM-PUSDRIVERS. Yet so often somewhere along the

way, in that beautiful blossoming from frosh to sophomore—and sometimes in blossoming late (sophomore to junior)—the initial disbelief is replaced by smiles.

After all, together we graduate from Foss Hill or Butterfield and move elsewhere, to distant lands. Earth House, HiRise, Psi-U, Pearl Street, Claptrap House, In-town. Blame it on urban

planning for making HiRise so distant from WeShop. In-town so distant from Olin. Washington Street so distant from everything. We have to drive because stuff is so far away, and we all have tight schedules and budgets.



SODD rally at the Campus Center Photo: Jessica Fantz





And so it goes. Home Avenue to the CFA. The CFA to Fisk. Clark to Mocon. DKE to Fisk. Weshop to HiRise. HiRise to Claptrap House. So much distance. So little time. So many hoots to experience.

But ponder this snappy fact:

Driving from the Science Tower to the CFA will cost a WESTUDENT 3 minutes and 28 seconds of productivity. Biking from the Science Tower to the CFA will cost the student 2 minutes and 41 seconds.

4:37 Agent 7A returns, unsuccessful—due to the incredibly convenient agility and speed of the automobile that outpaces the biker or walker.

4:38 Waiting again.

4:40 to 4:41 Five

OCDs drive by on Church St.

4:43 OCD 3 appears.

Agent 7A confirms 3 as HiRise resident, but nonetheless heads out for a most authentic mission impossible.

4:45 OCD 3 arrives at campus center for rest stop on trek home to Hirise.

**Cars are collectively helping to wage is a war of attrition on the stability of our global climate. Some cats call it global warming. Accurate, but maybe not ominous enough.**

Aside from the fact that the past 10 months have been the warmest ever recorded (and don't try any El Nino claptrappy arguments; do the logic: El Nino

makes global temperatures warmer than normal, but not record-breaking; something else is going on), we have been seeing a sharp increase in droughts, flooding, the

range of infectious diseases, and icky bug populations, among other portentous bon bons.

Cars collectively inundate our atmosphere with carbon dioxide, which causes the trapping of too much heat from the sun. The

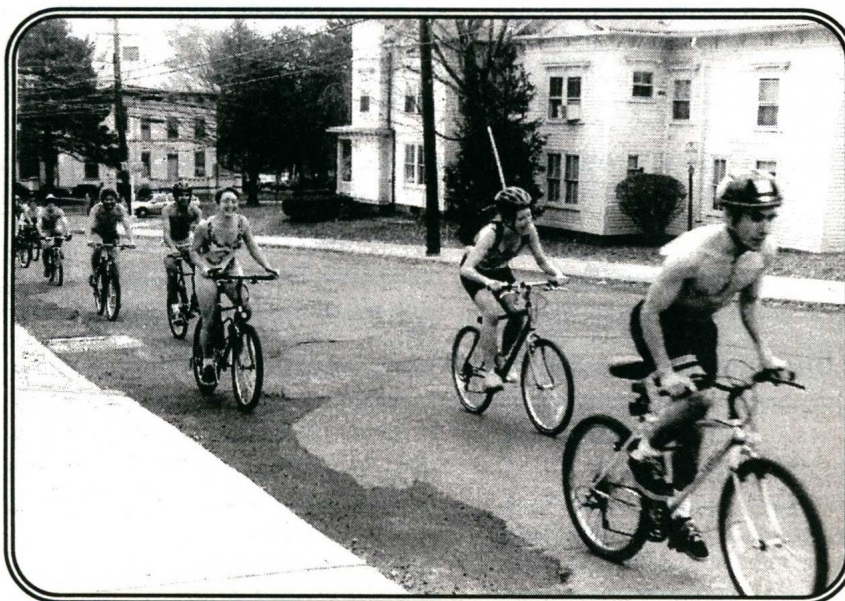
result is warmer ground temperatures and a consequent speeding up of the water cycle—water evaporates more quickly on the ground, and falls more quickly from the sky. The result is a greater frequency and intensity of precipitation events such as flooding, droughts and hurricanes.

4:50 Agent 7A arrives back at WeShop parking lot.

4:50:30 HiRise resident/OCD 3 who drove

to campus center returns to Weshop in car.

4:51 OCD 4 spotted. Agent 7A gears up and heads out.



SOOD takes to the streets Photo: Jessica Fantz

Indeed, biking on campus can be quicker than driving; and indeed there are always those instances where driving is quicker. But regardless of which is quicker, the truth is that on-campus driving is ass. Plain and simple. I'm going to have to say it: Cars are assy. Just plain assy. Do we really want an assy campus? Indeed not.

Of course, if we are going to understand the full

implications of on-campus driving we must begin to see ourselves as contributors not only to an assy campus but to an assy world. Cars collectively are helping to wage a war of attrition on the stability of our global climate. Some cats call it global warming. Accurate, but maybe not ominous enough.

**The message is clear:  
On-campus driving is assy.**

Consider this potty-mouth metaphor: "Think of cars as butts and bikes as hands that can create." Now, keep the image in your head for a moment. Out of the collective butt that is known as cars come carbon monoxide (cuts off oxygen flow to the brain, makes you stupid, or dead, in larger quantities), particulate matter (lodges in your lungs, inhibits breathing), volatile organic compounds (same thing), nitrogen oxides (reacts with sunlight to produce ground-level ozone, which attacks your lungs and thus inhibits breathing), and carbon dioxide (disrupts climate).

Ninety percent of Connecticut residents breathe air that fails to comply with federal clean air standards. That means WesAir too. Certainly the case





against on-campus driving would be all too compelling if this filthy air could be traced solely to the WESON-CAMPUSDRIVERS. But let's not kid ourselves to death, now; it can't.

We Wesleyan folk who currently oppose on-campus driving make no claims that it is the root cause of our environmental ills. But we would like to fancy the four-wheeled on-campus trek-taking as a root of environmental trashiness. View the dilemma trans-university-ally: Wesleyan is part of a crew of colleges and universities nationwide whose students drive over campus. Collectively, we are contributing to global warming and air pollution, and, above all, we are nurturing and perpetuating an all too pervasive, sorry notion: travel is best and must be done on four wheels.

Here we have this glorious opportunity to live car-free (some for the first time)—a small campus that is bikeable and walkable—and we are choosing the ass route. The implication is that if we are unwilling to use our two feet or our two wheels here, then undoubtedly we will be even more unwilling at home, in our cities, our suburbs, and towns.

We are thus agents in perpetuating autocentricity and its accompanying ills.

*4:54 OCD arrives at HiRise parking lot.*

*4:55 Must bike up hill again back to WeShop parking lot.*

*4:56 Agent 7A is greeted by a comrade. Converse.*

*5:02 At parking lot again.*

*5:03 Adjust posture.*

*Four OCDs pass by.*

*5:05 OCDs arrive (Confirmed residents of house on 200 block of Church St.).*

*5:06 OCD spotted (Confirmed LoRise residents).*

Oh, but the revolutionary movement has arrived. Yes, it goes by the name of SOOD Not Bombs. For the inquiring mind, SOOD stands for Students Opposing On-campus Driving. (The funny thing is that there is already an organization called Food Not Bombs, and there is a Wesleyan student named Erica Sood. . . ha ha. funny.) SOOD Not Bombs is committed to ridding this campus of WESONCAMPUSDRIVERS except for cases when heavy objects and emergencies are involved.

**Already, there are over 800 folks taking the challenge.**

**The challenge is not simply to sign one's name below the pledge that s/he will not drive on campus, but to accept that challenge, to think critically about it and examine how one can cut back and ultimately eliminate the car from his/her campus lifestyle.**

**Oh, but the revolutionary movement has indeed arrived. Yes, and it goes by the name of SOOD Not Bombs.**

Accompanying all public actions that SOOD conducts is the necessary SOOD Not Bombs Challenge. The challenge is not simply to sign one's name below the pledge that s/he will not drive on campus, but to accept that challenge, to think critically about it and examine how one can cut back and ultimately eliminate the car from his/her campus lifestyle.

Already there are over 800 folks taking the challenge. Among those who have dared to take the challenge: the ferocious Dan Engler '99, the bold Caitlin Dougherty '01, the dashing Edward Hong '99, and the mesmerizing Sarah Norr '02. And the numbers are set to grow as SOOD Not Bombs conducts more public actions, and as more and more signers tell their friends and comrades.

Of course, the message of SOOD Not Bombs is not all negative and no positive. Sure, cars are crap. But biking is beautiful. So are other forms of car-free transportation. Thus in proper guerilla SOOD Not Bombs fashion, we sponsored an event during Cars Are

Bad week: the scantily clad bike ride, the dynamic climax to a ruckus-filled week. We paraded in front of the campus center, and raided Mocon, and showed everyone

on campus why biking is just so irresistibly beautiful.

Next stop: working with Middletown urban planners to get bike lanes in the city, and rail connections to and from Middletown. The struggle continues, with so many targets to hit. And the struggle is endlessly fueled by what we know to be true: on-campus driving is assy.

*5:09 OCD spotted. Can't get on bike in time. Cars are fast and convenient.*

*5:10 Need beeswax.*

*5:11 OCD spotted (Agent 7A talking to friend, can't*

*move).*

*5:13 OCD spotted. The agent heads out. Driver and passenger know that they are being followed.*

*5:17 After a difficult chase OCD confirmed as residents of 356 Washington.*

*5:21 Weshop parking lot. Mission completed. Agent exhausted.*

*5:22 Enter Weshop to look for rewards for myself—string cheese, and lox, baby.*







# THE YEAR 2000 BUG: A RECIPE FOR GLOBAL DISASTER

BY JEFF SCHWABER

The Internet is home to hundreds of cyber-loonies, some of whose stories may not be quite as loony as you think. Let me introduce you to one. He is a nerd, a computer programmer, and has, for the last few years been hired by a large company to certify its computers as Y2K ready. We will call him James, and recently he finished fixing all the systems for the company that was currently paying him. As he was celebrating with his overtime bonus, a friend and co-programmer came up to him and said, "James? I realized yesterday that the work we just did was pointless if the power grid hasn't fixed its Y2K problems."

The next day, James went searching on the Internet to see if his work really had been in vain. The situation was worse than he hoped: the power grid is a computerized system that has units all over the place telling the transformer stations how much power they need. The whole thing is based on computers deciding how much power to send where. All power plants, especially nuclear plants, use computers and computer chips to control safety precautions. And while some plants have been tested, none have been certified compliant. Industry consultants agree that if the year 2000 came tomorrow, the entire grid would crash. According to them, there isn't time to fix all the problems.

But James was an optimist. Even if the power grid failed, essential systems could be brought back online within a few days and from there they could slowly put the system back together. It might take a month, but it wouldn't be the end of the world. This is the feeling most programmers have, and the most common understanding of the problem among the general public. It is not a feeling James kept for long. As he explored more of the problems the country would face when the year 2000 arrived, he came across huge gaps in the preparation that he had thought was so complete. From nuclear power plants to social security, he discovered what has been publicly available, but not obvious in the media: thousands of systems, many of which are basic to everyday needs, are not compliant and probably will not be by the time the year Zero arrives. Upon realizing the magnitude of the problem, he became a self-styled Y2K survivalist. James is now living in the desert with a 10-year supply of canned food and several guns. He has asked that his full name not be published because he owns a public deed to the property and he does not want any-

one to know where he will be hiding when the ball drops on Times Square.

There are many who believe in the new acronym cyberspace has created: TEOTWAWKI (The End of the World as We Know it). They are not members of strange cults that believe aliens will come and take the chosen ones away with them, they are the programmers who have seen the problem that is hardwired into our industrial society. You've probably heard about the Y2K problem. Wesleyan students have been receiving information from Information Technology Services (ITS) regarding how to make their computers compliant, but few consider it a problem that's going to significantly affect their life. After all, it's just a problem with computer software, and that's not really enough to destroy the world, is it? Well, no. It's not. The Y2K bug has to come out of cyberspace before it can really do damage. Unfortunately, it does exit cyberspace and enter the real world through embedded systems, or, in the words of *Wired* writer Kevin Poulsen, the "Pandora's Box of Y2K."

## Embedded Systems

An embedded system is a microchip that is used to control, monitor, or assist in the operation of machinery. They're very simple little devices, and most people have seen one at some point. They're in your car, microwaves, the air conditioning, and even some of the lights around campus. In industry, they're in everything from oil refineries to power plants to medical equipment. In medicine, you can find them in any piece of monitoring equipment, x-ray and ultrasound machines, and a lot of the emergency equipment in ambulances. There are millions, maybe billions of chips out there, and while most of them don't know or care about the date, a percentage, estimated by various industry consultants as anywhere from 2% to 65%, will have problems when Y2K arrives. Those problems could be as mild as a temporary glitch to complete failure.

You might wonder why such a small thing as the changing of the year would cause a computer program to fail. I've heard incorrect rumors that suggest normal possibilities—some believe 00 is a stop code or an override code to stop a chip that is otherwise never supposed to go off—as well as possibilities more loony than James' ideas: the mystic effect of two zeros in a date might cause the computer to suddenly become





sentient and overthrow its masters. The actuality is quite a bit different, and does not appear to be common knowledge. Frequently, programs are designed to accept data from the user (such as the date, which was once data input into the programs in embedded systems), and they are then programmed to check that data to make sure it hasn't been corrupted. If the program, by its checking routines, discovers that it has been corrupted, it can either, depending on the program and its writers, ask for the input from the user, or send a warning code and shut down. Most embedded systems are built around the assumption that if they get corrupted, they will be replaced, so they just shut down.

Examine for a moment a recent failure that put the scare of Y2K into the media. In 1996 Visa and MasterCard had to stop issuing credit cards while they fixed systems that had refused to accept cards with expiration dates of 00. Every system had to be replaced with one with a Y2K-compliant embedded system—not a minor task. While it can be seen as a minor failure, it's also a Y2K failure that occurred four years before AD 2000. As of October, approximately 23% of US companies had experienced a Y2K failure of some degree, and nearly all respondents called it a crisis. Millions of Americans have already experienced how even a single system failure can cause a disruption of everyday life. When one of the Galaxy satellites failed in May of this year, US pager networks, broadcast news operations, and many other systems were delayed, or even lost. The interruptions were brief because another satellite was moved into position to take up the slack, but these failures may be a glimpse into the future that awaits us.

### The Domino Effect

Some claim the Y2K bug will crash computers all over the place, and then they'll be fixed and it can't be seen as a major problem. The flaw in that argument arises as soon as you examine the domino effect. Once used to describe the gradual colonization of the world

by communism, the term now refers to the chain of capitalism that thrives in this country and that we are dependent upon. It is a chain like any other—cutting the weakest link, as Y2K has the capability to do, could bring down the entire chain.

Examine your average store. It has some computers, some software, and, if the managers have been aware of the problem, it has recently upgraded that software and those computers to make them Y2K compliant. They make certain the computers that keep track of the stock are all compliant, and the store can now be certain it is completely compliant and won't have any problems when the Year 2000 arrives.

And as the last hired programmer is leaving, he turns to the manager who just gave him his paycheck and says, "you realize, if your suppliers aren't compliant, you've just wasted your money."

No problem, right? After all, if this store is fixing its problems, its suppliers must be doing the same. Actually only about 40% of businesses have begun looking at the Y2K problem, and estimated as few as 2% have fully solved it. So while this little store fixes its problems, most of its suppliers haven't even begun fixing theirs. And few of the suppliers who buy their materials from companies that have looked into their problems. Raw manufacturing companies have one of the worst records among companies their size.

Or take a look at it from the other end: Electricity. All industry consultants and programmers agree that the utility companies do not have the time to fix all of the power plants. When the year changes, some plants will shut down, causing blackouts. The power grid is interconnected: if enough plants shut down, the increased demand for power would overload those still running. Gary North, considered by many a prophet of the failures Y2K may cause, predicts a rolling blackout that will start as the date changes on the eastern seaboard. The eastern power plants will fail and whether they take the ones further west with them will be irrelevant, because an hour later, those will collapse as well. But we've all survived short term power out-

## EMBEDDED SYSTEMS WHICH THE

### (a) Manufacturing and process control

Manufacturing plants  
Water and sewage systems  
Power stations  
Power grid systems  
Oil refineries and related storage facilities  
Bottling plants  
Automated factories  
Simulators  
Test equipment for control system development, maintenance and testing

### (b) Construction industry

Surveying and locational equipment  
Construction plant

### (c) Transport

Airplanes  
Trains  
Buses  
Marine craft (known cases include: radar mapping; ballast monitoring; cargo loading; ship performance monitoring; engine room vibration monitor; service aid for ships control; ship main control system)  
Automobiles  
Fuel services  
Air Traffic Control Systems

Signalling systems

Radar systems  
Traffic lights  
Ticketing systems/machines  
Car parking and other meters  
(d) Buildings and premises  
Electrical supply - supply, measurement, control, protection  
Backup lighting and generators  
Fire control systems  
Heating and ventilating systems  
Lifts, elevators, escalators  
Security systems  
Security cameras  
Safes and vaults





ages before, right? So the utility companies will go and fix the power plants and we'll have power again, right? Unfortunately the domino effect will at this point kick in. At the same time that the power plants collapse, every transformer in the country will shut down because of their integrated embedded systems. So if the utilities fix the power plants, there will still be no power. Let's say for the sake of argument, however, that they manage to fix the transformers before the Year 2000. All is good, we now say, right?

Perhaps not. Most power plants extract energy from fossil fuels. Trains cart fossil fuels from the mines. Many locomotives have computers or embedded systems, which would be a problem. And then there's railroad switches. There's not a single one in the country that's still manual—they're all computer controlled. When they fail, the power plants won't be able to keep running, even if their systems are checked out, without fuel. As for the plants that aren't running on coal—the hydroelectric, if they're made compliant, should keep running, but nuclear plants get their fuel by train as well.

Every system in the country is built on a foundation that might be wiped out. Everywhere there's a failure, the chain of the economy, the chain of our life, is disrupted. Many economists currently believe the Year 2000 will be the beginning of the largest US recession in decades. Our lives are so built around technology that many wonder if it's possible for us to live through even half of what the doomsday prophets believe will happen. What happens if the power stays, but the boats, trains, and 18-wheelers that transport our food to the supermarkets stop running? It's an important question that no-one answer.

### The Third World

While the Third World is less reliant on the computerized systems that we're used to, many emerging countries are as dependent on the technology that has become part of the fabric of our society. Yet while the companies and government of the US are aware of the

Y2K bug and are working desperately to fix their systems, emerging countries tend not to be as active in that area. They don't have the resources to replace all the components that need to be replaced.

Y2K survivalism at first seems limited to the Internet and computer gurus, but it has also cropped up in some rather unusual places. The CIA has warned its agents around the world to stockpile money and food in case of serious disaster on New Year's Day. Many multinational corporations are telling their executives where not to be on January 1st, 2000: any third-world country, any major urban center without heavy security, and on any plane or boat. The US military is conducting studies of its weapons systems and has recommended that no planes made before last year be in the air when the clock strikes 12. That effectively grounds over 70% of planes, and the navy is considering having all ships report to harbor for that day. Military advisers are currently suggesting that all nuclear devices be disarmed the day before in case there's a problem with those systems.

Whether or not the end of civilization will arrive on January 1st, 2000, most analysts at least see a world recession that could last for years or even decades. Most of the goods we buy in the US are made in the third world, and since the collapse there is likely to be worse than it is here, we may discover shortages worse than the Soviet Union ever experienced. I don't offer the fact that the world will end on January 1st, 2000. Opinions on the damage that will be caused vary from not even a disruption to complete and utter annihilation. No one person has full knowledge of the extent of the problems, just as no one fully knows how quickly repairs will be done to vital systems. Right now, there's not enough data to be certain. I've offered the worst of the possibilities that face us because they show what we should be prepared for. Similarly, knowing the places where the system could break down can tell us what we need to fix. I, however, will not be on a plane, in a city, or near a nuclear power plant when the ball falls on Times Square.



## Y2K BUG COULD POTENTIALLY AFFECT:

Door locks

(e) Domestic services

Catering

Cleaning

(f) Communications

Telephone exchange

Cable systems

Telephone switches

Satellites (see also w-87.htm Global

Positioning System (GPS) and the Millennium G3.6))

Data switching equipment (X.25, SMDS, FrameRelay, etc.)

(g) Office systems and mobile

equipment

Telephone systems

Fax Machines

Copiers

Time recording systems

Mobile telephones

Still and video cameras

(h) Banking, finance and commercial

Automated teller systems

Credit card systems

Point of sale systems including scanner/cashsystems

(i) Medical diagnostics, monitor-

ing and life support

Heart defibrillators

Pacemaker monitors

Patient information systems

Patient monitoring systems

Pharmaceutical control and dispensing systems, e.g. infusion pumps

X-ray equipment

(j) Testing, monitoring and diagnostic systems

Energy metering

Environmental monitoring equipment

(List courtesy of the Institution of Electrical Engineers website)





# KILL YOUR COMPUTER AND JOIN THE Y2K REVOLUTION

B Y D A N I E L D Y L A N Y O U N G

**"The schizoid attitude of the public toward technology — an attitude that mingles fear with hope — should not be dismissed lightmindedly. This attitude expresses a basic intuitive truth: the same technology that could liberate man in a society organized around the satisfaction of human needs must inevitably destroy him in a society organized around 'production for the sake of production.'"**

— Murray Bookchin, Post-Scarcity Anarchism

Worried about the Year 2000 (Y2K) computer problem? Personally, I can't wait. From the first time I heard about what it would do, I liked the sound of Y2K. And the more I learn about it, the more I find to like. Because the Y2K problem will strike a symbolic blow against computers — and computers are the most visible form of modern technology used to subdue and monitor regular people.

Computers, like all so-called labor-saving devices, never really end up saving the average person any toil. This is because the time that workers save by using a computer or another technological toy swells the profits of their bosses, the tiny minority who own the corporations and governments which currently rule this planet. If technology makes an employee's work go faster, their employer does not allow them to go home early and collect the same pay. Either the employer finds something else for the employee to do with their time, or they fire them.

In fact computers and other "high" technology have two main purposes, neither of which is saving *you* work. The first is to keep you occupied. Home computers keep the middle class consumers who can afford them at home playing in virtual reality or "communicating" with people over the Internet. This keeps them from getting out and observing the condition of the world around them, and from communicating with their immediate neighbors. If people didn't spend so much time at a computer screen, they might become aware of problems like crime or pollution as more than just abstract concepts — they might even try to change things.

Like other technological toys produced specifically for the consumer market (such as portable CD players or cellular phones) computers also give their owners a false feeling of being connected to the larger socioeconomic system. As long as they have their little electronic toys, a person can feel that they have a stake in an economy which exists completely oblivious to their interests, which in fact utilizes a dense web of advertis-

ing and pop culture in order to manufacture their very desires for high-tech commodities.

The second main use which computers are put to is security, a more obvious form of social control than consumerism. In this modern, capitalist world, security means the secure administration of individual property. When utility companies put control over an area's entire water, heat and electric system under one centralized computer, they are making it much more difficult for you to escape from their monopoly over these services. Without paying your tithe to their system, you are not even privy to the ancient technology of indoor plumbing.

But the system of security over property is far more complicated than this monopoly of capitalists over utilities. Computers have been amazingly useful in storing and organizing information for bankers, stock brokers and economists. By contrast, ATM machines seem like a rather clumsy way for citizens of our high tech nation to access *their* money holdings. That's why Iriscan, a company which sells iris recognition technology, is colluding with Nationwide Bank, the largest bank in the U.K., to push for use of people's retinal patterns for identification. Nationwide CEO Brian Davis claims that the company is simply concerned with, "ways to improve the service we can provide to our customers." However, Iriscan candidly admits that they soon hope to see their high-tech wares used for identification in health care, social services, travel, prison, and even "portable systems for on-scene recognition of individuals for police and military use."<sup>1</sup> Certainly our government will have few objections to keeping records of all its citizens' fingerprints, retina patterns or even DNA. This would make it much easier for them to track and monitor our behavior.

Don't think that I'm being paranoid here and imagining evil intentions that the government doesn't have. It's not about good and evil, per se, but about the general philosophy of modern government and society. If you look around you will realize how widespread the current obsession with security has become. Just look at the new high-tech electronic lock system on the Wesleyan dormitories. This complete waste of money has only limited security potential, but vast (if so far untapped) potential for tracking students.

Of course, we all know from watching spy movies that if the government or anyone else really wants to keep tabs on you, they can use phone taps, microscopic cameras, radio microphones, or satellite technology to listen in on everything you say and track every move



you make. Espionage isn't just one use that such "high" technology is readily suited for — in many cases it was originally designed for that purpose.

Then there's the costs to the Earth's environment imposed by humanity's obsession with high-tech gadgets. Though the overall effect is hard to gauge, just looking at the computer industry gives us an idea. The average personal computer consists of about 55 pounds of plastics, metals, glass and silicon. In the process of making this computer, approximately 139 pounds of waste will be produced while 7,300 gallons of water and 2,300 kilowatt-hours of energy will be used. The entire process of making computer circuit boards pollutes the world around us with airborne particulates, acid fumes, volatile organic compounds, toxic lead and copper waste, and solvent wastes. In the end the average personal computer will probably use about 9,200 kilowatt hours of energy in the course of its lifetime. There are approximately 120 million other computers owned and operated in the United States (300 million worldwide). When a computer's lifespan is over (this usually takes about four years), the computer becomes "obsolete" and joins millions of others which have already been disposed of. It is estimated that by the year 2005, about 150 million personal computers will have been sent to landfills in the United States. The waste from this obsolete technology will occupy around 300 million cubic feet, equivalent to a football field size stack of computer junk about a mile high.<sup>2</sup>

This kind of environmental impact might be justifiable, if computers were as humane and useful an invention as, say, vaccines. But they aren't. Computers pummel us with radiation, while simultaneously helping to make our lives more routinized, more alienated, and easier to manipulate and control.

These are the reasons why I wholeheartedly support the Y2K computer problem. If the most apocalyptic predictions come true, we will all get to see the false logic which first produced computers destroy itself. Perhaps then more people will begin to see that the way that capitalism applies modern technology is not only unnecessary, but anathema to a happy, healthy lifestyle.

Of course we must remember that if Y2K really shuts down the computer systems essential to social control, our corporate overlords will be fully prepared either to start them back up or to use their cronies in

the government and the military to enforce social control through more violent means. That is why anyone who supports the organization of a new society based upon egalitarianism, community, and democracy should make preparations to use the chaos of the Y2K shut down to band together and seize control of whatever computer systems are most affected. If Wall Street and the Pentagon are suddenly powerless, then by all means we should take these centers of social control by storm. But even if the only major shut downs are scattered systems of food distribution or heat and water, it behooves the affected communities to at least attempt to take control of these systems and re-structure them in a more humane (i.e. egalitarian and decentralized)

way. And it behooves the rest of us to aid them in this declaration of independence with any help that we can offer.

The necessities of life do not need to be distributed by central planners, either in the government or the corporate boardroom. They certainly do not need to be controlled and limited by a central computer. To liberate control of your community's resources and necessities from the control of the central government is the first step to re-organizing for a better society.

I do not have very high hopes for the Y2K revolution, at least not in America where most people are so alienated from one another, so well sated with consumerism, and so politically apathetic. But whatever happens on January 1st, 2000, it behooves the radical community at large to realize what an enormous consciousness raising event this date could be. No matter what the short term chaos, protecting computers and other forms of capitalist technology is most definitely *not in the interests* of anyone who supports sane and egalitarian social change. There is no Y2K "problem."

Only beautiful possibilities.



<sup>1</sup>All information dealing with IriScan and Nationwide comes from the article "Big Brother Grows Up: Biometrics, surveillance, and the repression of dissent" by Nicholas Allen Freeman (*Slingshot* newspaper, Berkeley, issue #61, Summer 1998).

<sup>2</sup>All information about the environmental effects of computers comes from *Live Wild Or Die* newspaper, issue # 7, Summer 1998.







# Adventure in Copland

The Story of an MPD Ride-Along

by Ben Abelson

My ride for the evening pulled up to my dorm five minutes late. I was about to embark on a night of passionate law enforcement with the officer inside the car. Or so I thought. It turned out this was only my transportation down to the police station. I had to wait for my assigned officer to finish up some things before my ride along began. We left the new model Middletown police car (who misses Ford Pintos?) and walked into the decaying police station. My driver asked me, "So...why'd you decide to do this?"

"Just for fun."

"Thinking of a future as a cop?"

"No. Just for fun."

"A career in law, then?"

"No. Just for fun."

"Oh." Freaking college kid, I could imagine him thinking, shouldn't he be getting trashed at a frat party or something?

I had to wonder if he even suspected my true mission: to report the seedy underside (or lack thereof) of the Middletown Police Department.

I was told to wait in the booking room for a few minutes. 'My' officer would be ready shortly. A burly man was sitting across the table from me, engaged in a somewhat heated phone conversation.

"They got me this time, baby. If you don't come and get me, I'm gonna stay here. I'm gonna do a year, I know I am. You gotta come get me tonight. Ok. If you ain't here; take care of my kid."

"What's he here for?", I asked the officer.

"Narcotics possession."

"Oh." I glanced towards the cop. Shouldn't you be out catching murderers or something?

The burly man resumed his conversation, "Course I'm gonna

marry you, shortie. Just as soon as I get out. You know how it is."

So goes the 'one phone call'.

Before leaving, I had a quick tour of the police station. While seated in the 'command center' I overheard the conversation of a few officers.

"Hey, who's on ammunition detail tonight?" one shouted.

"I am, what's up?" said another.

"I fell down on my [ammunition] magazine. Can I still use it?"

"Yeah, looks like only external damage. Should be fine."

"Oh, good."

"My magazine's all rusted up!" guffawed a large officer.

Wouldn't that make it hard to use?

It was time to get moving. First stop, Klekolo. Favorite hang-out of Middletown punks. There had been a noise disturbance of kids playing music too loudly, we were going to check it out. At first I was optimistic.

Approaching the coffee shop, we saw a group of kids outside. A few of them staggered over to the cop car, their eyes glazed over and reddish. A boy of about fourteen cockily leaned in the open passenger window, blowing smoke from his cigarette inside of the car.

"How's the wife?" he said to my officer.

"Oh, she's doing good."

"Baby's due real soon, huh?"

"Yep, yep."

A pre-pubescent girl in the background asked me, "Are you his son?"

"No," I said.

"Are you a skateboarder? He pick you up?" the first boy asked.

"Uh..."

"You like harassing skateboarders? We're just having fun,

man."

Ummm...huh?

"I'm on a ride along program...with the University," I said.

"Oh."

Just then another cop car pulled up alongside ours. Turns out the kids turned down their music a few minutes ago. We had missed the action.

"Those kids are always giving us trouble," my officer later told me, "they're always hanging around harassing people, asking them for rolling papers, you name it."

"Do a lot of Middletown kids go to Wesleyan?"

After his laughter died down, he told me no.

Driving through downtown Middletown, my officer remarked, "Geez. Sure is dull tonight. Nothing's going on." (These same lips would later utter, "Damn, I hate it when no one has warrants out on them!") As we approached an intersection, we saw a car go partway through a red light, then back up. The driver had spotted the police car just in time. Or so he thought.

"Hey, lookit that," said my cop, "should we pull him over?"

"Uhm...I dunno."

"We can pull him over if you want! Or, we can drive around and look for other stuff going on."

"Uh...geee."

"It's up to you."

"Well...OK, why not."

We turned a sharp turn onto the perpendicular street in the opposite direction, pulled a tight U-turn, and turned on the sirens. Half a block later, the car was pulled over, and I was running a license plate check on the on-board laptop. The guy was clean, and we moved along.

I could see now how the police could be a dangerous group. Alright, I knew that before. But now I had a chance to witness it firsthand. Too



much power in the hands of anyone could be dangerous. The cop had just pulled over a guy on my behest. And I had relished (well, somewhat) my "authority." What would happen if two hundred power-abusing cops were gathered together? The drunken riots at the NYC police convention a few years ago come to mind.

My officer and I engaged in some conversation as the night progressed. First thing he asked, of course, was if I played any sports at school. He seemed a little disappointed with my negative answer, although he perked up a bit at my mention of intramurals.

I was beginning to get to know my officer a little better. He went to a local high school, and had no plans to attend college after he graduated. He worked as a security guard while taking some classes

setting somewhere in the Midwest. "There's my truck," he said with a hint of pride in his voice, nodding towards a pickup with a gardener's trailer attached to the back.

We talked about his life, and the overall situation in Middletown. Apparently Middletown doesn't have the greatest school system, and he doesn't have the money to send his soon-to-be-born son to private school. He's hoping to move to another town about 30 minutes south when his son reaches school age. The schools are a lot better down there, he says.

He also told me how he enjoyed deer hunting.

Middletown is more run down than I had realized. During the tour that night, I was shown about 20 local 'crack houses' (in the words of my officer). Our patrol took us through a lot of run down areas, most of which are near the river and route 9. We

the kid was straddled across the windshield being searched. After not finding anything on the kid, and having me run a check on the on-board computer, my officer let him go on his way. "Sorry buddy," he said to the young man, "you know, it's late, and I see an unfamiliar kid walking by these crack houses.....I see a white kid walking in a black neighborhood...y'know?" Yes, we wouldn't want to promote interracial friendships, would we?

As the night wound down we found ourselves parked in a lot outside of a local crack house. Another police car pulled up, it too had a student riding shotgun. While the other student and I looked on, the two officers began an engrossing conversation. After twenty minutes, I had had my fill of hearing about their sex lives, wives, views on masturbation, and stripper stories. I also learned that they were getting

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at the local community college. A short time after he attended the police academy, a job opened up on the Middletown force. He's working the four to twelve evening shift right now. Everyday from seven in the morning until three he and another cop work as landscapers. Damn, an eighteen hour work day. My respect for the common blue collar worker definitely rose. I never had a dad who handled two jobs from dawn until midnight just to pay the bills. His wife also works on the police force. She handles the phones and computers behind the desk and is eight months pregnant.

Later on in the night he showed me his house. It was a modest ranch, which probably had about five rooms. A metal screen door guarded the front; a short paved path led the way through the small yard. No sidewalks. It all reminded me of a working class

passed by a local "auto body" shop suspected to be a chop shop, where stolen cars are dissembled to be sold and reconstructed.

Several miles away from downtown Middletown, up in the hills, are vast areas of condominiums and housing developments. They range from nice and well maintained, to decaying and rundown. We took a tour through some of the more decrepit developments. I was shown which houses are frequented by local drug dealers, the houses that are frequently called in for domestic disputes, even a house that was destroyed by two kids who were angry with their mom.

We were driving through a slummy area near the river, a few blocks off of Main street, when my officer pulled the car over next to a kid walking on the sidewalk. After a few seconds of conversation between the two, during which the kid explained that he was on his way to visit his "boy,"

paid to get drunk as a demonstration for a trainee DWI class. It's definitely a job perk, but is this really where police funding goes?

It was time to call it a night. After getting dropped off outside of my dorm I wondered if I had gained a new perspective about cops. I still don't like cops and have little respect for them. But, they are *people*, something I had been largely unaware of. Don't get me wrong, the cops I had gotten to see at work had fulfilled many of my stereotypes. They were loud, boorish, crass, and didn't seem overly intelligent. But, let's face it: some kind of a police force is necessary in contemporary society. Most people that are cops probably aren't far from the idealized upstanding citizen. I'm sure that the police would function better with a few more intelligent open-minded people working for them. But would you really want to?





# Tracking:

## How Our Public Schools Raise a Hierarchy

b y S a r a D o n n e l l y

High school. Happily or begrudgingly, we all put in our four years. Some of our teachers may have been boring, a few of them unapproachable, but on the whole, we learned. And many of us learned under the umbrella of our high school honors program. We were the prized students—highly motivated, focused and regarded by school staff as the cream of the crop. The opportunity to teach us was a reward for experienced teachers who had put in their time with the less motivated. We were at the top of the high school hierarchy and headed straight for college. In a meritocratic society in which public education was originally conceived as “the great equalizer,” every student has the opportunity to do the same, right?

Studies of the National Education Association was requisitioned to standardize secondary schools’ college prep curricula and college admission requirements. The rapid increase in secondary school graduates caused the first push to prepare students for college.

The Committee suggested a curriculum of four basic courses (classical, Latin-scientific, modern languages and English) to be offered to all students. Ability grouping was not a part of the program and was unequivocally opposed by the committee. The committee was further opposed to viewing college preparation as the main function of secondary schools. These proposals were drastically out of touch with the



Middletown High School. Photo: Jessica Fantz

*“Ignorance is the mother of industry as of superstition. Reflection and fancy are subject to err; but a habit of moving the hand or the foot is independent of either. Manufacture, accordingly, prospers most where the mind is least consulted, and where the workshop may . . . be considered an engine, the parts of which are men.”*

Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 1767

Public schools were established nationwide beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The influx of immigrants and the desire for the widespread education of the nation’s young citizenry called for a network of “people’s colleges” designed to allow every child the opportunity to further their education if they so desired.

Early public schools were widely homogeneous, comprised mostly of white upper middle class children. Children from lower classes often had to work rather than attend school to help support the family. In 1890, fewer than 10% of the country’s 14-17 year olds attended public or private schools.

In 1892, the Committee of Ten on Secondary

desires of the nation.

The enormous wave of immigrants around the turn of the century inflated student enrollment nationwide. Between 1880 and 1918, public school enrollment increased by more than 700 % to over 1.5 million students. By 1920, more than 60 % of high school age children were enrolled. The face of schools was changing. Public schools were put under enormous pressure to help assimilate new immigrants into American society. The call for greater social control was widespread. Immigrant children would be accepted, of course, but would have to learn their place. As turn of the century education theorist Edward A. Ross explained, it was the duty of schools, “to collect little



plastic lumps of human dough from private households and shape them on the social kneadingboard". It became the schools' duty to teach immigrants about American culture. In 1909, renowned educator Ellwood Cubberly wrote, "Everywhere these people tend to settle in groups or settlements, and to set up here their national manners, customs and observances. Our task is to break up these groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as a part of our American race, and to implant in their children, so far as it can be done, the Anglo Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government."

college level courses at the middle and high school levels, but underrepresented in the high school advanced English and Math courses. In proportion to their enrollment in Advanced English, White students were nearly four times more likely to be enrolled than their Black classmates and nearly three times more than their Hispanic classmates. In College Algebra, White students were nearly 5.5 times more likely to be enrolled than Black or Hispanic students. The nationwide pattern of disproportionate representation is most often found in schools where minority students are also poor.

Why are poor children so often evaluated as slower

***One of the most frightening aspects of the tracking system is that it's a bitch to change tracks.***

Schools consequently assumed an integral place in the industrial order, responsible for ensuring the Americanization of the new generation. They were to weed out the deficient from the excellent, in keeping, of course, with the established American hierarchy. The then popular theory of Social Darwinism supported the idea of inherited ability, i.e. a labor worker is born to be a labor worker. As the NEA stated in 1918, "Education in a democracy... should develop in each individual the knowledge, interests, ideals, habits, and powers, whereby he will find his place and use that place to shape both himself and society toward ever nobler ends." Say hello to tracking.

***The predominance of minorities and poor children in the lower tracks invalidates the meritocratic principles on which ability grouping is supposedly based.***

Through all of the school restructuring and reform, tracking has remained in place—though more and more education analysts denounce the practice as ineffective and biased. The predominance of minorities and poor children in the lower tracks invalidates the meritocratic principles on which ability grouping is supposedly based. While schools do not automatically place children in a track level according to race or social class, the manner in which the children are evaluated often increases the odds of a low income or minority student being placed in a low level. Nationwide, almost every study on tracking has found poor and minority students to be disproportionately underrepresented in high track classes.

A 96-97 study of the Middletown Public Schools conducted by the Diversity Enhancement Committee found Blacks and Hispanics to be fairly represented in

students? First, low income students may bring extra stresses to school and be perceived as rowdy and unmanageable, and teachers, faced with a classroom full of 'under-motivated' children (and well aware of their supposed academic capability) often value control over anything else. Consequently, unmanageable children may be incorrectly labeled slow and locked into a track with consistently low expectations of them.

A 1984 study on tracking conducted by education analyst Jennie Oakes found a marked focus on discipline in low track classes, which was not

present in average or high level classes. In many of these classes, time spent on discipline seriously reduces time spent on course work. "This is my worst class," wrote one junior high school low-track math teacher "Kids are very slow—underachievers and they don't care. I have no discipline cases because I'm very strict with them and they are scared to cross me. They couldn't be called enthusiastic about math—or anything for that matter."

But if they really want to, kids can move up, can't they? A remedial track is just a starting point from which motivated kids can move to higher tracks. Basically, why wouldn't the kids at the bottom want to scramble up to the top? Whether some students have the motivation and whether they have the tools are two separate issues. One of the most frightening aspects of the tracking system is that it's a bitch to change tracks. Teachers do not simply change the way they present subject material to the lower track, they are often





pressed to omit large amounts of material. Disciplinary issues, perceived capability, or student and teacher expectation may mean the difference between reading Shakespeare and a young adult novel. Oakes' study found some low track coursework differed markedly from basic reading and writing curricula and instead focused on life skills like how to write job applications and balance a checkbook. Without assistance from a parent or teacher, a low track student has a difficult time moving up, and this transition becomes more difficult the longer the student remains in the low track. If some classrooms systematically provide vocational training with low academic expectations through middle and senior high, and these classes are difficult if not impossible to break from without outside assistance, where does equal opportunity education fit in?

Oakes' research shows tracking has exerted negative long-term psychological effects on those in lower tracks. No one in school is more aware of their evaluated "slowness" than the students who carry the label. During some of the most tumultuous years of one's life, constant frustration at school can foster a feeling of social isolation with life-long repercussions. A 1976 book by Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, accused schools of socializing children into their inherited adult roles in society. By claiming that the biased tracking system is meritocratic, schools convince children of each ability level that they belong there. This rationalization of stratification is similar to that in the workforce, in which the individual is resigned or even dedicated to his or her role in the industrial hierarchy, believing the assignment to be objective and efficient. Bowles and Gintis cite frequent failures and negative socialization as acquainting a child with his or her socially responsible career, "By the time most students terminate schooling, they have been put down enough to convince them of their inability to succeed at the next highest level". This type of legitimization discourages the critical thought and social bonds that may challenge social structure.

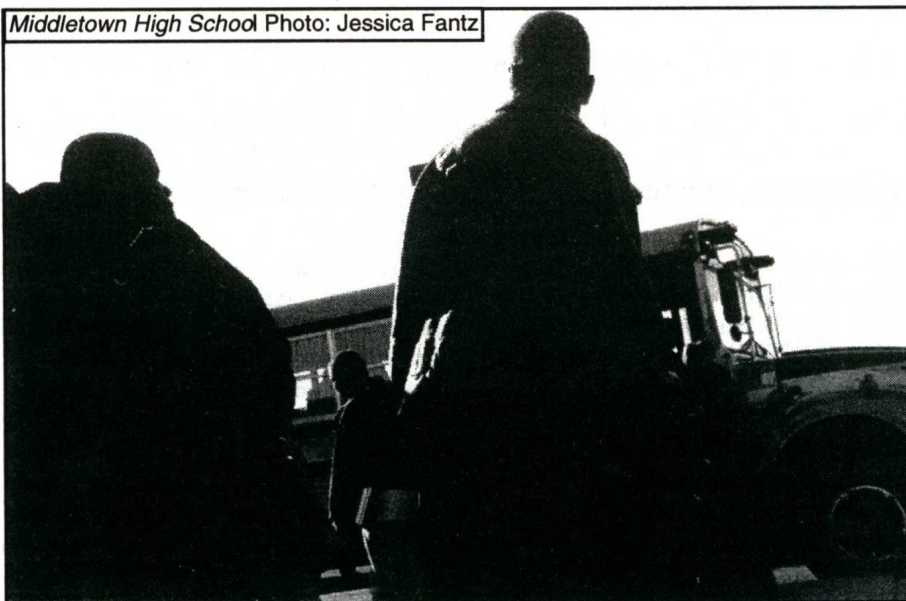
Clearly, a number of factors outside the school

walls affect the academic success of a child, including family support, personal motivation, and natural ability. Not all kids are born with the same strengths. Even if tracking were absolutely abolished, students' academic performance would vary. The system is flawed when, rather than offering every child the materials to succeed, it groups students early in their academic careers along ill-conceived measures of intellect that reinforce social inequalities. Public schools should not, actively or passively, reinforce the notion of birthright.

To improve individual academic achievement, many schools are drafting reform proposals which aim to equalize educational opportunity. Middletown schools have just released a five year plan designed to

raise expectations and standards among staff, students, and parents for every student, with special emphasis on minority populations. The proposal includes increased academic tutorial programs, a parent outreach worker, diversity training for staff, and a

Middletown High School Photo: Jessica Fantz



developed guidance program at the elementary levels.

Many involved in education believe disproportionate opportunities must be addressed early in a child's academic career. Tom LaBella, head of the Middletown High School Guidance Department, explains "You don't just suddenly move kids from basic to honors in high school. You must start earlier. The younger the child the easier." Academic support programs like Wesleyan's Upward Bound program also have succeeded in helping disadvantaged students reach their goals.

Heterogeneous or mixed ability grouping is becoming an increasingly popular alternative to tracking. Studies of heterogeneous classes show academic improvement among the lower tracked students and a continued level of excellence among those of average or higher ability. Mixed ability classes are just one of the ways to increase students' choices for the future and ready them for the adult rat race waiting just beyond the school grounds.





by Noah Lansner

# Vouchers:

## *The Latest Right-Wing Attack on Public Schools*

We are facing an education crisis in the United States. A report recently released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris indicated that American high school graduation rates are now 28th out of the 29 industrialized countries included in the study. This comes on the heels of a study done earlier this year, in which the results of a mathematics and science test of 12th graders showed the United States to be among the least knowledgeable of the industrialized nations. Average reading and math proficiency has failed to increase significantly since 1971, whereas writing and science proficiency has actually decreased in those years. These problems are worst in the cities, where under-funded, ill-equipped schools have extremely high dropout rates.

The response from many politicians has been so-called "school choice" programs—many of which include school voucher programs that allow parents to use public education dollars towards private school tuition. In the Milwaukee school system, which has one of the largest voucher programs in the country, the courts recently ruled that the program could be expanded from nonsectarian private schools to include private religious schools. This program has been supported mainly by those on the political right, but it also has support among many inner-city parents who hope to gain access to the vouchers and send their children to better schools. Newt Gingrich described his hopes for the program as "I want these children to have a chance to have a decent life. I want them to have a chance to go to college and not to prison."

The obvious problem with this viewpoint is that a voucher system is unable to help most children. According to a California study, the private schools in the state are currently operating at about 85% of their capacity. This means that less than one percent of public school students in that state could expect to find spaces in existing private schools. Since vouchers cannot go to a vast majority of students, most of these students will remain in public schools and will not be helped by voucher programs. Unfortunately, voucher programs, while potentially helping that fraction of students, will have an extremely negative impact upon those students who remain in the public schools.

First, those schools will lose money that has gone to private schools in the form of vouchers. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, Milwaukee Public Schools will lose more than \$25 million in state funds this year alone because state money will be redirected to voucher schools. While this amount is relatively small compared to the school's overall budget, it is not insignificant. Furthermore, the expansion of the program to private religious schools will remove more

money from the public school system in Milwaukee. Not surprisingly, expenditures for public schools vary greatly with median income; wealthy districts (median household income over \$35,000) spend almost \$1500 more per student than poor districts (median household income under \$20,000). It is those poorer districts that will be affected by the loss of students, and therefore the loss of funding.

The public schools in these districts will also lose their best and brightest students to private schools. Since private schools are selective institutions, they can afford to take only the top students who qualify for vouchers. The majority of the students will remain in the public schools. Rather than helping these students, the voucher system will hurt them by creating a two-tiered system where the top students go to private schools while the majority of the students stay behind in deteriorating public schools. Moreover, removing these top students will remove the motivated, determined, pro-active students (and their parents) from these schools. These students and parents are likely to be the ones who push to improve the schools that they are in. If they are removed from the public schools, a strong driving force for improvement will be removed.

In addition, voucher students are more likely to come from less disadvantaged backgrounds. A study of the voucher programs in San Antonio found that mothers of low-income voucher students were three times more likely to have had some college education than mothers of comparable public school students (55 percent vs. 19 percent). And, of course, if those students who remain in the public schools fail to graduate or go to college, the chances that their children will do so is drastically reduced. Voucher programs are doing very little to help the students who truly need it.

The voucher system is an attempt to avoid fixing, in a meaningful large-scale way, the problems with the American education system. Rather than helping all those who need a decent education most, the voucher system selects a handful of students from poor neighborhoods and provides them with a hand up, while leaving the rest of the children in these areas worse off than they were before. Education is a public right, which we have a responsibility to provide to every child in America. It is not something that can be subject to the marketplace, where the bottom line rules. American democracy is based on the idea that everyone has equal opportunity. Rather than attempt to make this a reality by helping inner-city children get the education they need, the voucher system selects a small handful of those students, who are likely to be better off to begin with, and helps them at the expense of the rest of those children.





# CUNY: The Attack on Public Higher Education

by Brian Edwards-Tiekert

The City University of New York (CUNY) has been called a lot of things in the last 150 years. In the first half of this century it was "the working man's Harvard," laying claim to graduates like Gershwin, Colin Powell, and Jonas Salk. In 1969, when it opened admissions to let in any city resident with a high school diploma, it became "one of the boldest experiments in American public education," and a model for the rest of the country. Now, with 210,000 students enrolled at 19 campuses, it's still the largest city university in the country; but in today's political climate—with a mayor who's built a concrete security wall around the steps of City Hall and a governor who sent spies into a Women's Studies conference to launch a moral attack on the curriculum at state universities—a battalion of pundits, politicians, and conservative tabloids have accused CUNY of "a total evisceration of standards," labeled it a "second-chance high school" whose "bloated bureaucracy . . . jettisoned academic standards," and whose students are "taking high school-level classes over and over and being passed whether they're working or not because the professors feel sorry for them."

Now that Mayor Giuliani and Governor Pataki have been in office long enough to replace most of the CUNY trustees with their own appointments, CUNY faces an attack that could take the 'public' out of 'public higher education.' Last May the Board of Trustees passed a Comprehensive Academic Plan (CAP) to eliminate remedial courses at the 11 four-year colleges and close admissions to anyone who can't pass entrance exams in reading, writing, and math. The plan would cut over 100,000 students out of the system, reducing CUNY to half its present size and making it the only city university in the country to deny entry to students with high school diplomas. What's at stake is the fate of open admissions—many suspect that if the right-wing foundations funding the attack succeed CUNY will only be the first of many city and community colleges to shut their doors to the public. And right now the only thing standing in their way is an injunction barring CUNY from implementing the plan until the Board of Trustees goes to trial for violating New York's open meetings laws.

The political battleground is remediation: most

colleges in the country offer remedial classes and fully one-third of this country's college freshmen take them, but conservatives—brandishing statistics about the number of CUNY students who can't pass a basic writing test (even though they'll be required to pass it before the graduate)—describe remediation at CUNY as a critical failing that lets academic delinquents into the system and drags the rest of the university down to their level.

Remedial courses cover everything from classes on algebra and basic calculus to writing courses targeted at students learning English as a second language. Remediation is offered in college so students can work towards their degree in their strong areas while they

catch up where they're weak. The point is not to keep students in dumbed-down classes, it's to get students to the point where they're ready to take high-level classes—a foreign student, for instance, might

take a remedial writing course to improve her composition skills enough to get her through an upper-level literature course the next semester; a student who graduated from an alternative arts-oriented high school might take a remedial math course before moving on to macroeconomics; someone coming from an urban high school with forty students per teacher and not enough money for books might need remediation in a number of areas.

Half the students at CUNY are foreign-born, and most of the rest come from the city's critically underfunded public schools—the number of students who need remedial course-work when they enter CUNY is, understandably, quite large: 60%. The Mayor, his trustees, and the tabloids latched onto this statistic to demonize the students and damn the colleges. Remedial students, so the rhetoric goes, are lazy kids who didn't work hard enough in high school and expect the state and city to subsidize a college degree anyway. The battle-cry is "standards"—CUNY, they say, is lowering its own to the point where the degrees it issues are worthless. Never mind the fact that at public schools you measure the worth of a degree by the caliber of the students who graduate, not the failings of those coming in. Never mind that recent CUNY graduates have earned more than their share of prestigious fellowships—including a Rhodes scholarship—

**Conservative politicians backed by right-wing foundations and research institutes have launched an attack that could take the 'public' out of 'public higher education'**



and that CUNY graduates average \$12,000 more income a year than those with nothing more than high school degrees.

Take a look at the people involved in the crusade against CUNY, and you'll see the attempt to "raise standards" for what it really is: an all-out attack on public higher education. Giuliani and Pataki's appointees dominate the Board of Trustees, and they're out for blood. Three of Giuliani's appointees owe well-paying city jobs to him. Officially, they're supposed to be apolitical stewards of the university. In reality—Giuliani's appointees commissioned independent reports on remediation in CUNY; when the reports came in with the conclusion that remedial courses have been successful for the last 25 years, they shelved them. The \$7 million Manhattan Institute churns out stacks of propaganda against CUNY, most notably Heather MacDonald's articles in their publication *City Journal*. She's taken swipes at the university's Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies and gone so far as to say that CUNY's policy of open admissions encourages students to do worse in New York's high schools. CHANGE-NY (also known as the Empire Foundation for Policy Research), an organization that's criticized Gov. Pataki for being too *lenient* with New York's state universities, drafted a forty-page report with The National Association of Scholars that blasted CUNY's core curriculum for not including enough Western Civilization and tagged as too "narrow"

courses like Sociology of Women, African Literature, The Third World in the Modern Era, and U.S. History: 1865-Present. The National Association of Scholars, which masterminded the myth of the "PC" takeover of American colleges and has spent the last ten years accusing multiculturalism of destroying higher education, was founded by a leader of CHANGE-NY, Herbert London. Among other things, London has written that neighborhoods like Harlem are "assailant farms," and that "in two hours an unleashed police force could do the trick."

What will be the effects of the CAP? All told, the plan will keep at least 21,000 students from enrolling the first year it goes into effect, and will cut total enrollment in half by the time it's completely phased in. Proponents might argue that students still have the opportunity to take remedial courses at the two-year colleges—the plan allows for one year of remediation at CUNY's six two-year colleges—but students might wonder why they should have to go somewhere that they can't take the classes they *are* qualified for. The remediation that the plan does leave in place institutes the equivalent of grade-school tracking in higher education—students with one or two deficiencies are bound to a more limited, vocational curriculum.

CUNY's budget is driven by per-student allocations from the city and state. Under CAP, CUNY would lose an estimated \$80 million just from reduced admissions. What's more, remedial skills courses tend to cost less to run than college-level classes, so the tuition and allocations for students doing remedial work subsidizes the college-level courses that others take. The problem compounds itself: less students means less money, less money means cutting faculty, courses, and departments, and raising tuition; after you cut enough, you attract less of the students who *can* pass the admissions exams, and lose even more money. If Pataki and the state Republicans remain in power, it'll be easier for them to bully around a withered CUNY, to cut its budget further and privatize more and more of its services—CAP already mandates that what little remediation it leaves be outsourced to companies like Kaplan and Princeton Review.

In one sense, this is just the most recent—and most brutal—blow CUNY has suffered over the last 25 years. New York's 1975 fiscal crisis kicked off twenty-five years of budget cuts in CUNY—in 1975, the school started charging tuition for the first time, now it's up to \$3,200 a year. Over the last two decades, fully half of the faculty in CUNY have been cut, and

class sizes and course-loads for teachers have risen tremendously. Professors at Wesleyan made a big huff over the *prospect* of having their course-load increased from four courses a year to

**What's at stake is the fate of open admissions—many suspect that if the attack succeeds CUNY will only be the first of many city and community colleges to shut their doors to the public.**

five—and rightfully so; more courses means less time to spend with students. In CUNY, faculty have to teach at least *seven* courses a year, and there's talk of raising the number further. One of the most common responses to tight budgets is to replace full-time faculty with part-time adjuncts: they're paid less, don't get benefits, don't get reimbursed for office hours, and don't have union fees withheld from their paychecks—which means they have a financial incentive not to join the teachers' union, one of the only organizations presently *defending* public higher education. The state has limited TAP grants (financial aid for state residents) at four-year colleges to eight semesters—which means that students who need longer to graduate—either because they have other responsibilities (like a child) or because they have a lot of catching up to do—have the rug pulled out from under them. Most recently, welfare reform has pushed students out of the schools. It is often impossible for students to get workfare assignments anywhere close to campus, and they have to drop out. The state passed a measure mandating that workfare programs be developed near CUNY campuses, but Giuliani refused to release the funds. The number of welfare recipients at CUNY has dropped from 27,000 in 1995 to 12,000 in 1998.

In another sense, the crusade to close admissions





marks fundamental shift in the political discourse on public higher education. Politicians are treating 'public' higher education as a privilege rather than a right. Until this point, all the blows to CUNY have been justified on financial grounds: "Sorry, there's just not enough money." Now the city and state are running surpluses, and conservatives are publicly attacking the institutions themselves: "You don't deserve the money." They claim that CUNY has no "standards," that the degrees it issues are worthless, and that the students aren't even worthy of the name. Underlying everything are wistful references to what CUNY was before it opened admissions in 1969: the "working man's Harvard." Of course, the "working man's Harvard" was really "the white working man's Harvard." Nine out of ten students were white before the school opened admissions. Five years later, minorities constituted a majority of the student body.

CUNY is not an elite private institution that has to compete with other schools to attract the best applicants and increase its 'selectivity' rating to move up a notch in the *US News & World Report* rankings. It's a public institution whose mission is to provide access to a college education; it should be evaluated according to the education it provides, not the level of its students when it admits them. What's important is how well-prepared students are when they graduate, and the fact

that so many are under-prepared when they enroll is simply a testament to the hard work students and faculty put in to get to that point.

Everything becomes more impressive when you consider the hurdles CUNY students have to jump just to stay in school. Tuition's up to \$3200, and half of CUNY's students have household incomes of less than \$22,000. Ask a professor at one of the schools, and he'll tell you: his students *work*—part-time if they're lucky, full-time if they're not, double shifts if they're supporting a child. Spending forty hours a week at a low-paying job makes it hard to take on a full course-load, but if students take less, they lose any aid they might be receiving.

Ingrid Amorini, a native of Argentina, went through CUNY's York College as a single parent who was also caring for a severely retarded brother. She failed the English writing exam when she first took it, but she graduated as valedictorian. At her graduation last spring, she said: "York College gave me the necessary remedial course, which allowed me to pass the written English exam the second time I took it. I got straight A's that first semester and all the subsequent 148 credits. All I needed was a chance."

That's a chance she wouldn't get if conservatives had their way.



# THANKSGIVING

OFF CAMPUS DIARY

BY HANNAH NIELSEN-JONES

Every year it's the same. I start by peeling the apples, just the way my best friend's grandmother taught me—she lived through the Depression so she knew how to get every last molecule of fruit off the peel, no waste—and then slice them, not too thick, not too thin. The faint scent of apples, tart and green and irrevocably tied to the smell of wet bark, reaches my nose. It's a fall smell. Over the years my task evolved from making the relish with my dad, grinding up the cranberries and the oranges, to helping my mother bake brownies, to the point where this cranberry-and-apple cake is now completely mine to make.

The apples are done. I measure the dry ingredients and sift them together, noticing again how nutmeg brings up the strangest memories. I'm not really sure if they belong to me or if I appropriated them from some dusty book about the so-called "exotic Orient." I remember that the recipe is always doubled: one to take to Long Island, to celebrate with; one to leave at home for after we return.

Going back through my day, I think about the homeless man I met on the street, outside the CVS

where I suddenly found people I hadn't seen in months. Everyone was huddled together for warmth and sharing the quick updates—"oh I love your haircut, it's so cute" and "how are your classes" and "I haven't heard from her, do you know what's going on"—when a man came up and asked us for change. We all fumbled in our pockets, our cracks about being poor college students confronted with real poverty; our moment of joy at randomly finding each other tinged with a sad reality check.

Then, all of a sudden there was a tiny moment of clarity: the man asked for spare change and he was gracious, is matter-of-fact. A window opened in the usual interaction, put things in a different perspective. Everyone's feelings of guilt and anger and fear disappeared. He asked for our help and we gave it, without ulterior motive or doubt. He said, "Happy Thanksgiving" and we all said it back, realizing how incredibly lucky we were, to be born where, when, and to whom we were. That moment of double-time, of grace, is too precious to let go of. I hold the feeling of it close to me now, as the white cloud of flour descends





into the bowl, because it is rare that I find myself in that state and can recognize and appreciate it. That is something to be thankful for.

Now is the time to add the fruit: apples and jewel-bright cranberries. My best friend in seventh grade liked to eat cranberries raw, an incredible feat of badass-ness that I always tried to replicate, with no success. Now she's in Madison, at the University of Wisconsin, where she can smell the cows from her dorm room, majoring in psychology. The similarities between her present life and my mother's young life, at the same school, with the same major, have become almost eerie. She jokes that she'll grow up and move back to our hometown and give her children my name. The joke is a good one, but still far enough away to be comfortable, as painful as the distance—emotional and physical—between us has become.

My friend is spending Thanksgiving with her family, in my hometown; my family is making the trek to Long Island, as we have done for years. My mother has always felt out of place with my father's family, through circumstances, unintentional and intentional accidents, miscommunications and just plain differences. Which is not to say that she and my aunt don't have a wonderful, mutually-nurturing connection or that our twice-yearly game of charades with my uncle's family doesn't send her into gales of laughter. It's just that, with some of them, she acts self-conscious, never really feels comfortable. But every year she makes chicken a la king and mince pie for my grandfather, knowing full well that it doesn't matter to my father whether or not she does, knowing that my grandfather will vehemently protest as she puts it into his freezer, knowing that it's as important for her to make it as it is for him to pretend that she shouldn't have gone to the trouble. She knows it's important. The surfaces, the outward actions and comments, matter less, perhaps, than sitcom families would have us believe.

I pour the batter into the cake pans, set the timer, and slide the pans into the warmed oven. I cast about the kitchen for the remaining tasks and think about this trip and about all the trips my family has made and will make over the years. My parents, each the furthest child away from their parents, have taught me this about love: that making the trek, however many hours in the minivan it takes, is important. Emotional pain will probably be a part of every trip, even if for no more reason than that each of my surviving grandparents on either side keeps becoming older and frailer. It's depressing, but at the same time a powerful reason to continue, to forge ahead, to maintain the connection.

My mother loves my father and my father loves my mother. That in itself is something to be thankful for. They have stayed married to each other, in the face of conflicts that I know little about; and part of their union is this Thanksgiving trip. It has taken me my entire life to understand this, and while I'm confused that it took me so long, I'm glad that I figured it out with enough time left to appreciate how much my parents have let love inform and guide their lives. And

I'm glad that they've made sure that both sides of my past are important to me, that distance is hard but not impassable. That lesson is something to be thankful for.

There won't be as many faces around the table at this year's feast. For reasons too odd, complicated, political, and emotionally difficult to deal with, my aunts and their assorted families are having their own Thanksgiving in Queens. That leaves my parents and me, my grandfather, my aunt and uncle and their two sons. My cousins are fifteen and twelve; I love them both so much it hurts. Every time I see them it's been far too long since the last time—we've become older and older in each other's eyes. I dread our impending separations into the pre-defined categories of sulky teenager and tense young adults. I hope that we'll somehow escape them and always be able to talk to each other.

Each time we visit, they have acquired another cute, random characteristic. This year, the older one listens to ska, at top volume, and the younger one wears bigger pants than I do. Somehow each trait makes them even dearer. When we first get out of the car, the older one bounds up to us, takes off his headphones, and hugs me; he's become taller than I am in the months since I last saw him. The younger one picks up his hems and reaches out his arms and I hug him. Then I hug my aunt, and she starts to cry, and I start to cry. It's wonderful to be together again, to finally have made it after so much preparation, and at the same time so very sad because the house used to have every single one of us in it and this year we're split in half. Then my mom starts to cry. So we're standing there in the driveway, three tall women crying. My cousins and my father and my uncle kind of stand around, not quite knowing what to do, but happy to be together, waiting for the moment to pass.

Later, listening to my retired Presbyterian grandfather say grace over the table, my eyes fill with tears again. It's the simple relief of being with family, and of not eating Mocon food, and of seeing friends, and one million and one very-impossible-to-quantify things. It strikes me that this is such a dear time, a fleeting moment. Very quickly my friends will become either better or less known. My grandparents will grow older and die. My cousins will grow up even more, my parents will stop sending me cookies in the mail, and I'll begin to have more than a vague idea about what I want to do with my life. But now is a shadow-time, a time between childhood and adulthood, between responsibility and authority, between knowledge of just myself and knowledge of the world. And I'm lucky that this time is full of grace, that I have people to love and to listen to and to rebel against, that I have moments where the obvious outside becomes the internal monologue, the inside observation. It is a very real Thanksgiving. I smile through my tears.





# GUESS WHO SUCKS?

## Fashion and Exploitation Meet in Mexico

by Tyler Cabot

*Farmington, Connecticut. October 1998—*

Students massed in front of the Guess jeans store in Westfarms mall and began handing out leaflets. Some customers looked at the leaflets as if they were written in an entirely different language. They held the fliers at arm's length as they examined them. The looks on their faces seemed to say, "huh, why, what is this? I just wanted to shop in peace."

Others didn't even bother to read the leaflets.

After a quick glance—long enough to realize the fliers contained no coupons—they crumbled them

with one hand and tossed them into a trashcan. Others allowed the laws of gravity and apathy to do their work for them, setting the papers free to glide whimsically down to the cheap slate floor of the mall.

There were also shoppers who stopped to read the leaflets, and even better, some who wished to learn more about the issue. These shoppers placed their shopping bags down, and put off buying a new dress or sweater for a few moments to inquire "Why boycott? Why Guess?"

A story spanning six years was divulged: a major clothing manufacturer accused time and time again of degrading and exploiting factory workers; alleged interrogations and firings of union supporters; social activists led by UNITE (Union of NeedleTraders Industrial and Textile Employees) determined to bring justice; a controversy embroiled with high finance advertising schemes, media coverage, and even Rock and Roll spokesmen (Rage Against The Machine have become UNITE poster boys in support of the protest.) The story of a corporation sweating like their impoverished factory employees.

### A History of Labor Problems:

Guess's troubles began in 1992, when sweat-shop abolitionists first sighted them within their scopes for operating factories in violation of state and federal labor laws. In August of that year, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) cited Guess for federal wage and hour law infractions. At the time numerous clothing manufacturing companies were being investigated for sweat-shop violations.

Guess sought to resolve the situation swiftly; to usurp the negative publicity this labor scandal could cause. Guess and the DOL struck an agreement in which Guess pledged to begin monitoring its outside contractors (who are responsible for employing those

who dye and sew the garments) to ensure that there would be no more labor law violations. In addition, Guess agreed to pay its workers \$573,000 of back wages.

Guess contrived a monitoring plan in which all contractors signed pledges guaranteeing workers fair wages, clean and safe working conditions, and freedom from exploitation. In addition, an outside monitoring agency was hired to ensure factory compliance with the

anti-sweat pledge. Guess rose from corporate thug to "industry model" according to the U.S. Department of Labor. This was the first time a large manufacturer had "voluntarily" pledged to fight sweat shop labor. The fashion industry and the

U.S. Department of Labor greeted the agreement with critical acclaim. "I believe that the Guess-DOL agreement is truly historic and that Guess stands as a bellwether in the fight to eliminate widespread wage and hour violations among apparel industry and assembly workers" said Marshall J. Breger, Solicitor of Labor for the U.S. Department of Labor, at the signing of the agreement. Guess not only escaped from this first

**A major clothing manufacturer was accused time and again of degrading and exploiting their factory workers.**



Guess manufacturing operation in Mexico.  
All photos from [www.guessboycott.org](http://www.guessboycott.org)

sweat-shop scandal nearly unscathed, but became known as politically correct and socially in-vogue retailer.

In spite of their new "good boy" image and promises to discontinue sweatshop labor, the California Division of Labor Enforcement (DLSE) discovered in the summer of 1996 that Guess was engaged in illegal industrial homework operations, manufacturing clothing in private homes. Adding insult to injury, a class action suit was filed against Guess in August of the



same year which sought renumeration of wages for thousands of workers who claimed that Guess owed them for wage and hour violations. Guess, the great "industry model," was also a great industry liar.

In the months to follow, the company's reputation quickly began to unravel. According to UNITE, the DOL cited Guess contractors for numerous wage and hour violations, the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE) raided five more industrial homework operations, and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) accused Guess of illegal firing, and interrogating and discriminating against pro-union workers. Clouds of scandal were beginning to form over Guess headquarters in Los Angeles.

Within weeks, Guess announced plans to move a very substantial number of their operations to Mexico, Chile, and Peru. According to Guess this move was made to stay competitive with other clothing operations which had made similar relocations. UNITE accused Guess of running away from American labor laws and media attention. The Wall Street Journal reported Maurice Marciano, Guess chairman and chief executive, as saying that UNITE's union activities and the various government accusations were "a factor [for the move] as well."

#### Trouble In Mexico:

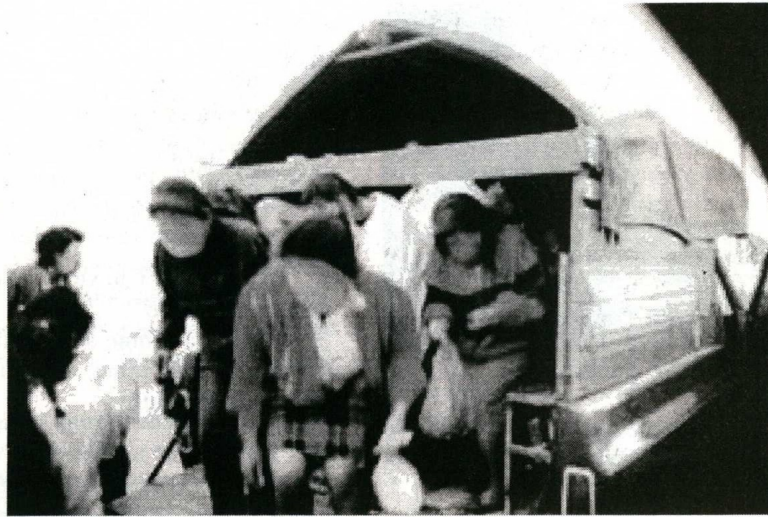
Tehuacán, Mexico, approximately a twenty hour drive from the U.S. border, with hundreds of clothing manufacturing plants, became the center of Guess's clothing production infrastructure. The operation in Tehuacán is very similar to the system Guess utilized in Los Angeles. Contractors are hired to produce a quota of goods. Then, the contractors set up 'maquiladoras' or factories, and hire workers to produce goods for a set price.

Throughout the process of relocating to Mexico, Guess stood by its declaration that it was 100 percent sweat shop free. Having heard the same story before, social activists decided the trail of degradation and exploitation which Guess had left in the U.S. needed to be followed.

A delegation co-sponsored by The Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice and the Highlander

Research Education Center formed and arrived in Tehuacán on a fact-finding mission in February of this year. The findings, published in a report entitled "Cross Border Blues: A Call For Justice for Maquiladora Workers in Tehuacán" are astonishing. Violation after violation were reported first hand through interviews with current and past factory workers. The document describes numerous violations of

labor and humanitarian laws: forced overtime, child labor, pregnancy discrimination, unsanitary conditions, and both physical and verbal abuse. The personal accounts within the report bring the tragedy to life, giving voices and names to the exploited. A thumb-through of the report displays impoverished workers, stuck between indigence



Workers getting off a truck at a factory in Vaqueros, Navarra, Mexico

and sweatshop labor.

#### The Story From Guess Headquarters:

In the midst of this scathing report, and the other allegations, Guess has stuck to its policy of denying all wrongdoing. The company claims in its public relations material that it is indeed sweatshop free, but has "become a high profile target of an organized campaign to undermine consumer confidence."

Furthermore, Guess posits that "as a company

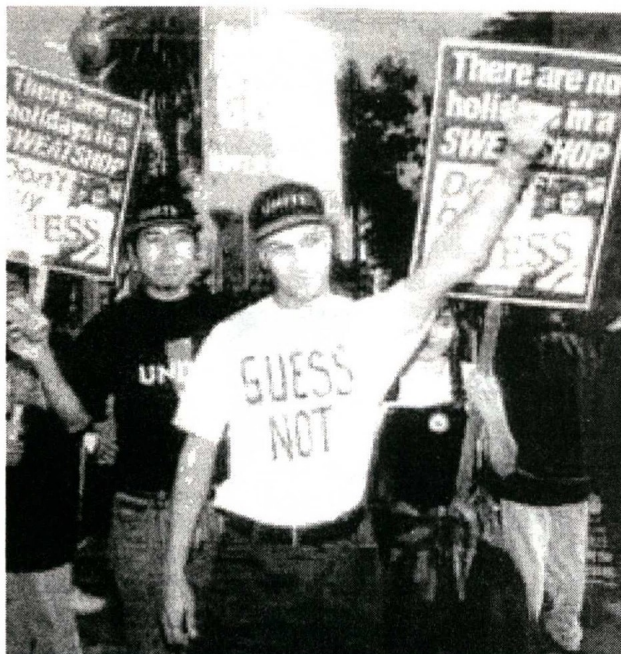
founded by immigrants who pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, Guess understands and relates to the dreams, fears, hopes, and pride of the men and women

who are today's garment workers. Guess cares about our employees, and the employees of our subcontractors, and we reject the lies and misrepresentations directed against us."

#### Wesleyan Students Take Action:

With the release of "Cross-Border Blues," UNITE, frustrated by the manufacturer's refusal to admit wrongdoing and take action, has pushed its anti-Guess campaign into high gear with the organization of a nationwide college campus boycott of Guess. The protest's primary purpose is to raise awareness about the company's illegal practices, and to urge consumers to participate in a boycott of all Guess products. "Guess





Morello protesting Guess in Santa Monica, CA

relies on college students and other young people for a large percentage of their sales. We are spreading the word about illegal and immoral practices with activities on campuses all over the United States. We hope students will boycott all Guess products until the company obeys the law and respects workers," said Nicola Searle, a sophomore at Georgetown University.

Tom Morello of the band Rage Against the Machine has been used as a front man in the campaign against Guess to generate publicity. Morello was arrested last winter when he and other protesters workers blocked the entrance to a Robinsons-May department store in Santa Monica, California.

"The people who listen to Rage are the same people that Guess is trying to sell clothes to. [Guess] is counting on the fact that people are too stupid to figure out the exploitation that goes on," Morello told Rolling Stone magazine last February.

It was as part of this boycott that Wesleyan students (Meredith Lobel '01, Katie Roberson-Young '99, Julian Adler '02, Denise Schulman '00, and Rose Cahn '01) headed to Westfarms Mall in Farmington, Connecticut. "We are vehemently opposing the exploitation of workers' human rights by any company or individual," said UNITE co-organizer Meredith Lobel '01. "Guess has had a history of both worker exploitation and public deception that must be stopped...Wesleyan as an educative and 'moral' institution needs something to show that we are responsible and that we care."

Workers at the Westfarms Guess store would not comment about the UNITE campaign or the allegations against Guess, but maintained that neither Wesleyan's protest, nor UNITE's boycott as a whole, has had any affect upon sales at their store.

After distributing leaflets outside of the Guess

store, the group headed to Filene's Department Store, and urged the on-duty manager of the Junior Department (which sells Guess jeans and clothing) to question Guess about its policies.

After listening to the students, Filene's agreed to relay their concerns to Guess and later passed on some of the leaflets which the Wesleyan students had been distributing to their Guess representative. The representative accepted the flyers without comment.

I questioned a couple of girls outside the Guess store during the Wesleyan demonstration. The teens had walked to the entrance of the store, said a few words to one another, then immediately turned around and left. "Why did you leave?" I inquired, waiting for a gem of an answer about how they couldn't support Guess because of sweatshop labor.

"They didn't have any red dresses," one said.

"Huh?"

"They didn't have any red dresses, I need a red dress for a dance."

Guess has some strong allies in its battle against UNITE and the other social activists: commercialism, fashion, and apathy.



### Excerpts From "Cross Border Blues:"

#### Forced Overtime:

*Since I started here, there have always been one to two veladas [all nighters] a week. Supposedly the veladas are optional, but sometimes they force us to stay and do these all nighters. The last velada I did was in mid-February. They didn't let me go home after my shift ended at 11 p.m. because they said I wouldn't come back for the velada if they let me go home. I ended up working from 3 p.m.-6 a.m. the next morning. I was very tired the next day. My feet and body hurt a lot. But I had to come in the next day at 3 p.m. as usual and work until 11 p.m. They say there's a lot of work and they have to finish the work when they have to turn in an order.*

Manuel, maquila worker at Lavapant

#### Pregnancy Discrimination:

*When I applied for work, they gave me a pregnancy test. If you're pregnant, they don't let you work here. The nurse said, "You might as well tell me now if you're pregnant, because if they find out that you are, they'll fire you. Pregnant women can't work here."*

Claudia, former Vaqueros Navarra worker

#### Intimidation and Fear:

*There's a lot of pressure in the maquiladora; the line supervisors yell at workers cussing us out, saying things like 'fuck your mother' and you're an ass-hole, hurry up.'*

Alberto, maquila worker at Vaqueros Navarra



# Capital Punishment: THE CASE FOR ABOLITION

by Adam Hurter

One of the greatest injustices in U.S. history is taking place with the consent of most citizens: capital punishment. The death penalty is inherently racist; wildly expensive; used to kill innocent people, children, and the mentally retarded; and does not deter crime. Presently, the death penalty is legal in thirty-eight states and has been used in thirty-four of them.

The death penalty is a permanent punishment in a legal system that can be described as imperfect at best. Twenty-three times this century people have been put to death who were later proven innocent. Who knows how many others' innocence has never been discovered. Many other innocent people have been released from Death Row, very close to the permanence of the electric chair.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court reintroduced the use of capital punishment in 1976 after a twelve-year ban, there have been 486 executions. At least twenty-four executions have been botched. Furthermore, many states have atrocious conviction rates. For instance, Florida has executed forty-three people since '76 and has wrongly convicted nineteen. Illinois has executed eleven people and wrongly convicted nine. These are not encouraging numbers when dealing with state-sanctioned murder.

In addition, the death penalty is consistently applied in a racist manner. Ninety percent of the people U.S. government prosecutors seek to execute are Black or Latino. Three out of four people waiting to be executed in federal and military prisons are African-American. Those accused of killing whites are also more likely to be sentenced to death. In Mississippi, killers of whites are five times more likely to receive the death penalty; in Maryland they are seven times as likely. Why do we continue to support racist execution?

One reason is that many people are led to believe that capital punishment is a more economical way to handle convicted murderers. On the contrary, the death penalty costs taxpayers ludicrous sums of money. An average death penalty case—from arrest to execution, including appeals—costs anywhere from one to three million dollars, according to government studies. Independent studies have placed that figure at about seven million dollars. Life imprisonment, including time of incarceration, costs taxpayers about \$500,000. This money could undoubtedly be better used to improve the country as a whole.

This economic relationship is very visible in certain instances. In 1995, New York brought back the death penalty, though experts estimated that it would cost the state about \$118 million annually. That same

year, state leaders complained about a small budget and massively cut funds for public higher education and health care.

Meanwhile, the the death penalty is being used in more and more cases. The U.S. has shown that it has no qualms about killing children. Only six countries today have ever executed children: Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, and the United States. The U.S. leads the pack in the number of children executed. Every major international human rights treaty prohibits the execution of people under eighteen years old. In the U.S., twelve states have no age minimum for capital punishment.

That's not all. We also execute the mentally retarded. Currently, over 300 mentally retarded people sit on Death Row. Over thirty-one mentally retarded people have been executed since 1976, nineteen over the last five years. Ironically, more mentally ill people are on the streets now than ever before because government mental health funds have decreased significantly. These funds have to be cut, politicians claim—there just isn't enough money. Maybe they're spending too much on capital punishment. Rather than attempting to help the mentally ill, we as a society wait until they do something horrible, and then kill them. It is a grotesque method of clearing away those who society doesn't want.

The death penalty also does not deter crime. Nations with capital punishment continue to have higher murder rates than those without it. The five non-death penalty countries with the highest homicide rates average 21.6 homicides per 1,000 people. The five countries with the death penalty with the highest homicide rates average 41.6 homicides per 1,000 people. Sixty-seven percent of law enforcement officers do not feel that capital punishment decreases the rate of homicides. Indeed, it doesn't.

There is still hope to end capital punishment. The government faces intense pressure from grassroots anti-death penalty groups and human rights organizations. And some states refuse to participate in the nonsense entirely. These states realize what the rest of us must come to understand: the death penalty is unjust and harmful to society. Politicians take pro-death penalty positions to appear "hard on crime." Activism and word-of-mouth could change that by swinging public opinion. Killing to punish for killing is immensely hypocritical and does not succeed in its goal. Eradicating it completely will bring us one step closer to peace.





# Thank God **William Safire** Is **NOT Commander-In-Chief**

BY Olivia deBree

Putting troops in another country is a dangerous exploit, an idea not to be casually thrown about. Yet, William Safire does just this. He says invade Iraq, put troops on the ground, replace the Iraqi government. Forget all this mumbo-jumbo about more prudent strategy. Saddam's the problem, so get him out of power. Many people realize getting Saddam out of Iraq would be the ideal solution, but to presume that this is also realistic is naïve.

Safire proposes four strategic options specific to the most recent Iraqi crisis and criticizes three of those four options. Safire says doing nothing about Saddam's latest antics (the first option) would make the U.S. "the world laughingstock." He also reduces the third option, a light air attack, to ridicule by referring to it as the "300 pinpricks" strategy. And he clearly kills the fourth option (heavy air attack) at the end of his article, when he says, "So long as our purpose is only to "degrade" facilities, rather than to replace an aggressive regime, the strategic advantage is [Saddam's]." Safire advocates the second option, invading Iraq with ground troops in order to depose Saddam and install a democratic government. But he suggests this idea haphazardly, because he never probes its merits and imperfections.

An invasion will not occur under the present circumstances and for good reason. To begin with, the U.S. military does not want to risk further casualties.

Since U.S. intervention in Somalia in 1993, when an initial intention to aid starving people evolved into an operation to capture a Somali warlord and resulted in the brutal murder of U.S. soldiers, the military has resisted the temptation to put U.S. troops in foreign territory. Furthermore, memories of Vietnam have not dissipated. Meddling in the affairs of a smaller country elicits panicked responses from people who lived through and fought in the Vietnam War. Clinton is not up for reelection, but public opinion influences his decisions nonetheless.

Secondly, it will not be easy to kill Saddam or even to simply wrest power from him. The last thing the U.S. needs is a failed attempt to assassinate. Didn't we learn from the Bay of Pigs Invasion? (Incidentally, both U.S.

and U.N. law prohibit assassination, so it would be both illegal and hypocritical to assassinate Saddam in order to enforce U.N. inspections).

Thirdly, installing a new government in Iraq would require U.S. occupation—perhaps for a considerable time. Are we really prepared to devote immense military, technological, and financial resources to this cause? Wouldn't our security be even more endangered than it is now if we had troops in Iraq for the long haul?

Furthermore, there is no indication that a democracy could function in Iraq. Sustainable democracies require a democratic political culture. Iraq has no parties, religious organizations, or other marks of

The last thing the U.S. needs is a failed attempt to assassinate. Didn't we learn from the Bay of Pigs Invasion?

*William Safire writes OP-ED columns for The New York Times. The excerpt below is from an article printed in the Nov. 12, 1998 issue of The New York Times.*

## Saddam's Strategy" By William Safire

Forget the fascination with our semiannual military buildup in the Persian Gulf to persuade Saddam Hussein "this time we're really, really serious." That point's been made...

Focus instead on the strategy of both sides...

President Clinton has four strategic options:

One is to do nothing, become the world laughingstock...Another is to remove Saddam's threat by a second invasion, this time setting up a democratic government in Iraq as we did in 1945 in Germany and Japan. Neither of these options is being considered by this White House.

Instead, we have strategic choice No. 3: "300 pinpricks" to exhibit our extreme irritation. Cruise missiles

launched from sea for a couple of weeks, accompanied by film showing the uncanny smartness of our munitions, would be followed by our unilateral declaration of "mission accomplished" and a promise to annoy Iraq again next year.

The fourth choice is the "degrade his capabilities" option, which seems to be in favor: Use cruise missiles at first to disrupt communications and depress air defenses, then strike with carrier aircraft and heavy bombers from land bases. This would target suspected weapons manufacturing



"civic culture". The Iraqi people have no reason to expect their votes to count or to trust a government to peacefully solve domestic issues (through ballot boxes, interest groups, etc...). There is no precedent for embracing norms of tolerance and individual rights. And without any of these, it is naïve to assume the Iraqi people would respect the law—even if its authority comes from a democratic political structure.

As far as legalities go, Article 2, Section 4 of the United Nations Charter prohibits use of force by its member-states. Article 51 does allow for the use of force in self-defense, but an argument for overthrowing and replacing the Iraqi government out of self-defense carries little support.

As long as we're on the subject of technicalities, perhaps we should read the fine print for such an invasion: thousands of innocent and defenseless Iraqi citizens will die. These words should be in bold print, in headlines, and firmly stamped into our brains. Why don't you italicize *this* point, Mr. Safire? U.S.-imposed economic sanctions leave thousands of Iraqi children starving and sick—no, make that dead—each month. Can we, in good conscience, choose a strategy that will result in the deaths of more Iraqi citizens—who deserve no blame for the actions taken by their oppressive and authoritarian government? Do we value civilian Iraqi lives as much as U.S. military lives?

Finally, Safire makes a gross error when he dismisses the significance of a unified international coalition. A close look at Safire's understanding of Iraqi motivations reveals how and why he makes this mistake. Safire says Saddam's "ultimate purpose is to be able to credibly bluff the West into letting him dominate his part of the world." Iraqi motivations are not this simple. Instead, they involve complex domestic and international concerns. Hussein plays this game of chicken (threatening international

security and then conceding at the last possible minute before implementation of military threats) in order to wear down international consensus. He hopes to gain a small concession with each new resistance to U.N. law and to eventually cause fragmentation among the great powers. This time he almost succeeded, as both French and Russian consent for the proposed U.S. strike arrived only after diplomatic efforts. If the U.S. invades Iraq, France and

Russia will protest loudly and perhaps take radical steps to oppose the invasion. The prospect for escalation and the potential for world war should never be taken lightly. Consequently, international unification is vital to world peace, and Safire is thoughtless

to belittle its significance.

Mr. Safire has some nerve to suggest in a highly-esteemed, national newspaper that the U.S. invade Iraq and then not present to his readers the pros and cons of this argument. He makes a complex issue look simple. He decides how the U.S. should respond to the situation in Iraq by a process of elimination: The other three strategic options won't work, so go ahead with the fourth option. Invade, Safire declares. The public may give a New York Times columnist a head start—assuming he has inside knowledge or expertise in the issues he addresses,

but this doesn't give him license to propose ideas without considering them thoughtfully. A journalist cannot guess what impact her writing will have on the public or policy-

makers, so she is charged with immense responsibility. She must go to whatever lengths necessary to ensure her reflections are both accurate and meticulous.

Get respect, Mr. Safire.

**Do we value civilian Iraqi lives as much as U.S. military lives?**

**International unification is vital to world peace, and Safire is thoughtless to belittle its significance.**

sites, tank parking lots and army barracks, similar to our softening-up air campaign of a decade ago.

The Clinton Joint Chiefs would claim we successfully "degraded" his threat. That military jargon means "temporarily lessened" but by no means "ended." We would again wait for an internal revolt to topple him (as we have been for Fidel Castro for 40 years). If it doesn't work out, that's the next U.S. President's problem, though Saddam may then be in a position to reach for his ultimate strategic goal.

What is that goal? And could the incipient aerial punishment help Saddam achieve it?

First, *it is to endure and survive* ...

Second, *counterattack with his people's suffering...*

Finally, *make a deal with the U.N. for limited access by non-American inspectors...*

Although Saddam miscalculated wildly a decade ago, his current strategy takes full advantage of Clinton's expected decision to wage limited air war with its modest compliance aim.

So long as our purpose is only to "degrade" facilities rather than to replace an aggressive regime, the strategic advantage is his.

His ultimate purpose is to be able to credibly bluff the West into letting him dominate his part of the world....

The U.S. has no missile defense. Does a prudent President let him grab those oilfields, or will Clinton's successor be forced to gamble a U.S. city on the hope that a homicidal maniac is only bluffing?







# 'SKELETON IN THE CLOSET OUT AT WORK

AONGUS BURKE

"Unless you're a prostitute or a porn actor what does your sexuality have to do with work?" states Martin, one of dozens of gay men interviewed by James D. Woods for his book *The Corporate Closet*. "Sex belongs in the bedroom, not in the boardroom," he continues. Martin's words would probably win him the favor of your average heterosexual. While polls generally show that a solid majority of Americans (and thus presumably most straight Americans) believe gays and lesbians should not be discriminated against in most kinds of workplaces, most of them also don't see why it should ever come up as an issue. "I don't go around broadcasting my heterosexuality" is a familiar variation on the common sentiment of many heterosexuals as they decry anything from a gay pride parade to an ACT UP demonstration. We don't ask, why must you tell?

But even if one accepts the need or desire for queers to be public about their sexuality in certain spaces, not many straights would consider the workplace to be one of them. The office isn't supposed to be a political warzone and it certainly isn't supposed to be a sexual playground. So why would a gay person ever need to come out of the closet while at work? Many, perhaps most gay and lesbian people who work for corporations—probably not the most radical bunch of queers to begin with—seem eager to internalize this logic, just do their jobs, and deal with the gay stuff at home after a pleasantly apolitical day at the office.

Enter me.

Being gay is not a small part of who I am. It has everything to do with the person I have become over the past few years and I mostly like that person. Homosexuality has both sexual and political compo-

nents. I spend a lot of time thinking about and acting on both. I'll spare you the details on what that means for the sexual dimension. Politically, however, I can say that I have found, and continue to find, gay activism to be one of the few things in life I find genuinely fulfilling and worthy of my passion. And I believe that the most basic form of gay activism is to be open about who you are.

But I have also found over and over again that being open about being gay is a much more complicated matter than it seems on the surface. It can mean not lying if someone asks you whether you're gay (a point-blank question almost no one ever asks) or it can mean making your life a complete open book (a level of openness almost no gay person wants). As far as occupational matters go, the first time this came up was when I was creating my resume. Though I thought about it for a bit, this one turned out to be a no brainer: there was really no way I could *not* list Queer Alliance in my section on extracurricular activities at Wesleyan. It was the organization that I had done by far the most—and the most important—work with while I was at Wes; if I had left it off, no potential employer would think I had done much of anything besides study in college. Besides, I reasoned, would I really want to work at place where they'd have a problem with someone who was openly gay?

By February of last year, I was beginning to wonder. In spite of my hotshot CSS major, my honors candidacy and what I know was a damn good GPA, I had gotten very few callbacks for first round interviews and none for second rounds. The interviews themselves were proving to be another arena in which sexuality and its disclosure were carefully negotiated. Every







interviewer I encountered last year would obviously have read my resume, but very few asked me any questions about Queer Alliance. Some didn't ask questions about extracurriculars at all, but most of my interviewers made a very telling move. Even though it came after the Queer Alliance blurb, and even though it occupied only about a third of the latter's space on my resume, most of my potential employers questioned me about the second campus organization I listed, a little old campus publication called *Hermes*.

Of course, all of them did ask me about what kind of things I wrote about for this magazine. And even if I wasn't entirely forthright there (and I did become

a bit more evasive as it got later in the year and the prospect of being unemployed and living with my parents—more gay-related issues there—for a long period after graduation became a more and more likely possibility), I was going to have to tell them what I was writing my thesis on—gay men, AIDS, and promiscuity. So, ultimately, sexuality became the unavoidable issue in every interview I participated in. And anyone who was considering hiring me must have thought that I would make it an issue in the workplace.

I sent resumes and cover-letters to about 50 companies (all of whom were actively recruiting) last year. About ten of them called me back for a first round interview. Three gave me a callback for a second round interview. I got exactly one job offer. Was I the victim of discrimination? I honestly don't know. I thought I had pretty decent credentials for employment, but it's also true that I hadn't done much rigorous coursework in the more quantitative strands of the economics. I also didn't have real experience working in an office environment at that point. It's possible that this hurt me when I applied for investment banking and consulting positions early in the year (though everyone told me that not having an extensive background in these fields wouldn't be a huge disadvantage). During second semester I spent a little more time making my resume look pretty and I began to apply mostly for paralegal positions. I fared quite a bit better. Still, I was surprised that only one firm made me an offer and I have my suspicions as to why. But another gay male who graduated from Wesleyan last year, one who applied to most of the same law firms I did, tells me that he doesn't think that being open about his sexuality and his activism on his resume and in interviews hurt him at all. Still another tells me that he thinks that the "Queer" in Queer Alliance may have cost him a job or two; since those employers who

did bring up QA in my interviews invariably asked about the name uncomfortably, I suspect he's right. But who knows?

One theory I consider is that a few employers did discriminate against me because of my sexuality, but only because it was such an overwhelming presence on my resume and in my interviews. Even if several of my classmates were discussing their activist accomplishments in their interviews, none of them probably brought up topics as charged as AIDS and promiscuity the way I did. In my case, it was necessary. But I didn't know how necessary it

was going to be for me to continue making my sexuality an issue once I actually landed in the workplace. If someone said something homophobic in the office, I definitely

intended to speak up. But even more than that, I wanted to continue being an activist in the workplace and being out would be a necessary part of that. Studies show that people who know someone who is gay are less likely to support homophobic policies and politicians. And maybe a few of the people I was going to work with would even start asking me questions about things gay. They might learn something from me (and I from them). But when would it be appropriate to out myself? I didn't think I could take any cues from the heteros in my office on the matter. Every moment, it seems, is an appropriate moment to tell the world that you're straight.

Don't think so? Consider the following. The very first day at my job, the other paralegals in my practice group took Steve—one of the other new paralegals—and I out to lunch. Within five minutes I found out that Steve was married. By the end of the first week, I knew which of the other paralegals did and didn't have a significant other of the opposite sex. It wasn't much longer before I knew the same for most of the attorneys in my practice group. And, to top it all off, employees of the firm who are married get their spouse's name listed next to theirs in the firm directory.

Disclosure of your sexuality when you're straight comes in forms as innocuous as telling your officemates what you did with your girlfriend last weekend or what schools your kids are going to. Coming out as gay is somehow always a bit more dramatic than that. I suppose I could be just as casual about revealing my sexuality as your average straight person, but I know that it's not a casual revelation. Some people will invariably be made uneasy by it and it almost seems insensitive (and thus counterproductive) to assume otherwise. It becomes easy to feel like you have some sort of obligation to prepare people for the discomfort you might be introducing into their lives by telling them that you're gay.

But the flip side of the coin is that if you have to pre-

Disclosure of your sexuality when you're straight comes in forms as innocuous as telling your office mates what you did with your girl-friend last week or what school your kids are going to.





Much of the bonding that takes place between my co-workers—not unlike much of the bonding that took place between my peers in high school, is of a decidedly heterosexual nature.

pare people for this revelation, it's as if you're trying to make a spectacle of yourself. If telling people that you're gay *can't* just flow naturally from the conversation, then outing yourself will likely seem like an attempt to draw attention to yourself and ultimately to some hidden political agenda. How many gays have tortured themselves to tell someone that they're gay only to have their confidant respond with something along the lines of "That's fine, but why'd you think that I'd want to know about it?"

You're damned if you do, you're silenced if you don't. I tried to strike a balance at work. After a few weeks of encountering situation after situation where I deliberated the appropriateness of coming out—and always hastily decided not to—I finally came out to a coworker—Steve, actually. A female friend of mine had visited me in the office that afternoon during my lunch hour. After she had left, Steve asked whether she was my girlfriend or not. I wasn't about to let this opportunity go. "Oh, no," I said with a hint of exasperation. "Steve, I'm gay." Someone flushed behind us (did I mention we were both at the urinals in the men's room?). "Oh," he said. "I had no idea." We both finished our business, zipped up and quickly got the hell out of there. Whoever was behind us didn't leave that stall until we were long gone.

Awkward though it had been, I determined that this method of coming out to people was a good one. I decided I would try to transpose it to new locations in the office. It was a one-on-one situation, the kind that entitles me to a little more discretion over what direction the conversation gets steered in. On the other hand, the revelation was still casual enough that I couldn't easily be accused of having a hidden agenda. I'd just wait for everyone else to ask me if I had a girlfriend and before I knew it I'd be the office homo.

But for that plan to work, I'd need some cooperation from the office heteros. They'd have to assume I was one of them and ask the all important question. But as it turned out, besides Steve and one of the other newer paralegals, no one was interrogating me on that dimension of my life. I didn't get it. How had it happened that I knew all about their personal lives without even trying, while no one seemed to give a damn

about me? How rude!

I couldn't figure it out until one day one of the more experienced paralegals asked me a question about my previous work experience. "Are you the one who taught with the Princeton Review?" Justine asked. "No," I

replied a bit bewilderedly. "Oh," she said. "One of the new paralegals had it on their resume."

"You saw all of our resumes?" I asked. Then I remembered that Justine, along with two other paralegals, had actually interviewed me for this job. Of course she would have seen my resume. That means that she saw that Queer Alliance section. My sexuality had probably been well known among the paralegals in my practice area all along. And if that was the case, it shed a whole new light on why people weren't asking me any questions about my personal life. Maybe they didn't want to know.

It's not that I ever really thought that the people I work with would be particularly disgusted by my personal life. But if it's an uncomfortable topic for me to bring up, imagine how uncomfortable it would be for them. At this point I realized that if I was going to really be out to them, I couldn't just wait for them to give me an opening. So I became a little bolder. When Steve started talking one day about his Ph.D thesis to a bunch of us, I started talking about my undergraduate one (I think most people figured out that if I researched and wrote about the sex lives of gay men, I was probably one of them). When people started talking about their relationships in my presence, I no longer spoke about them in the abstract and started talking about my own experiences.

I think all of my fellow paralegals know at this point and I like that. The women love to have me around when they talk about relationships and sex. And I've even had a few good heart-to-heart talks with several of the paralegals, of both genders, about some of the more serious issues surrounding homosexuality.

But at the same time, I also know there's a limit to our camaraderie. I will probably never be really great friends with any of these people. Naive though it seems to me now, I had actually thought that coming out to my co-workers would make me closer to them. I mean, how could I ever be good friends with these people if I kept such an important part of my life hidden from them? But some things don't change. Though I've given them all a peek at my personal life, and though some of them are intrigued enough to occasionally ask for another look, none of them seem to want to

There's not a whole lot of room for someone like me fit in. And I think we all know it. I don't often get asked if I want to hang out with the rest of the group after work, and I usually say no when I am asked.



be a part of that life or make me part of theirs.

Much of the bonding that takes place between my workers, not unlike much of the bonding that took place between my peers in high school, is of a decidedly heterosexual nature. The guys talk with the guys about the girls; the girls talk with the girls about the guys; the girls flirt with the guys; the guys flirt with the girls. There's not a whole lot of room for someone like me to fit in. And I think we all know it. I don't often get asked if I want to hang out with the rest of the group after work, and I usually say no when I am asked. They have their bars to go to, I have mine. I was a little disappointed when none of my co-workers showed up at my apartment-warming party a couple of months ago, but I wasn't really surprised.

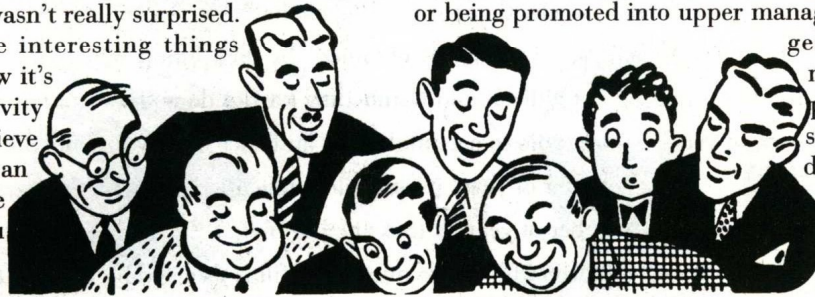
One of the more interesting things about all of this is how it's affected my productivity in the workplace. Believe it or not, it does have an impact. Unless you're self employed, you usually have to be a team player in order to succeed in the work world. I'm not sure I'm much

of a team player. Even though I may be out to all of the paralegals in my practice area, I still haven't talked about that part of my personal life with most of the attorneys that I work with, not to mention any of the clients I deal with on a regular basis. The opportunity does occasionally present itself, but these are relationships that I am less willing to jeopardize by bringing up a possibly uncomfortable topic. When you're being so careful about managing a certain piece of information about your life (never mind hiding it) around certain people, it's not likely that you'll be spending a lot of time learning about them. You try and get down to business with them, cut to the chase and wrap up the conversation as quickly as possible. This may seem efficient, but in some ways it's not. If I developed a closer relationship with the lawyers or clients I work with, I'd probably ultimately learn a lot more. The client might end up telling me things about him, his job and the organization he works for that would help me serve him better. The attorney I report to might be willing to mentor me if she had any reason to give a damn about me.

For that matter, if you're not particularly good friends with the people you work with, chances are you're not going to want to spend a lot of time around the office. You're not going to want to work closely with the people you need to, or put in the hours of overtime required to do a project well.

It's occurred to me at times that my sexuality might in some odd way help make me a *better* employee. I'm probably never going to be tied down with the kind of family obligations that make it so difficult for others to work many late nights. And the fact that I don't socialize a whole lot with everyone else in the office probably *does* make me a more efficient worker. But I often get the feeling that whether I'm a better or a worse worker for being gay won't matter a whole lot down the road. There's a good chance I'm screwed either way.

Success in the business world isn't unlike success in the academic world. You're never going to get very far if you're not good at your job. But making partner or being promoted into upper management is a lot like getting tenure; it's never based upon purely meritocratic standards. It also depends on your ability to fit into the boys' club upstairs.



*M*aking partner or being promoted into upper management is lot like getting tenure; it's never based upon purely meritocratic standards.

It also depends on your ability to fit into the boys club upstairs.

partner at my firm probably makes three times what a senior level associate does. So, unless s/he brings in a lot of valuable clients or is instrumental to their retention, there isn't often a huge financial incentive to offer a lawyer a partnership. But what if you're a fifth-year attorney who has become pretty chummy with some of the partners? Maybe you go out with them for drinks on occasion or have been to their house for a fourth of July barbecue. Maybe your wife is friends with some of their wives or you were invited to their son's wedding. In cases like this, maybe those partners wouldn't want to see you leave the firm. Hell, it might be awkward at that stage to have to call you into their offices to tell you that you should start looking for a job somewhere else.

I doubt that I'll ever put anyone in that kind of uncomfortable situation. It's possible that someday, somewhere I'll be a valuable enough employee to someone on a purely financial sense that everyone will want to make sure that I stay. But ultimately I think it's more likely that, when the time comes, few people are going to be really heartbroken to see me leave. They might think that I did good work or that I was nice guy. A few might even think that I helped them learn something important about gay people. But a few will also probably think to themselves, "He was a faggot anyway."

I think the powers-that-be at Wesleyan call it collegiality. The average



# HERMES INDEX

1. Number of packs of unfiltered cigarettes one would have to smoke daily to simulate the air pollution in Beijing: 3
2. Percent of convenience stores in East Austin, TX that sell milk: 50
3. Percent of convenience stores in East Austin, TX that sell alcohol: 100
4. In 1990, the average number of years an American five-year-old was expected to attend school or college: 16.3
5. In 1996: 16.8
6. 1990 U.S. ranking among the 29 richest countries in the world, regarding time spent in education: 1
7. 1996 U.S. ranking for the same: 12
8. 1996 high school graduation rate in the United States: 72
9. 1996 U.S. ranking regarding graduation rates (among 29 richest countries in the world): 28
10. Percent of surveyed Washington journalists who thought that the median U.S. income was \$150,000 or more: 31
11. Number of files on GOP activists "improperly obtained" by the Clinton White House: 900
12. Percent of Americans who think that the Republican and Democratic parties do not reflect a fair range of views: 66
13. Number of years it took radio to accumulate an audience of fifty million: 38
14. Number of years it took television: 13
15. Number of years it took the Internet: 4
16. In a ten-year study, out of 1300 Hollywood films, the number of films directed by African-Americans: 58
17. Percent of above 1300 films with African-American crews: less than 3
18. Percent of total revenues generated by the Hollywood film industry that money spent by African-Americans creates: 25
19. In 1997, percent of people who walked or biked to work in Boston: 18
20. In San Francisco: 17
21. In Washington, DC: 16
22. In New York, as a whole: 14
23. In Manhattan, specifically: 25
24. Out of the hundred firms worldwide that produce and sell instruments of torture, the number based in the United States: 42

Sources: 1: Los Angeles Times; 2-3: Public Voice for Food and Health Policy; 4-9: New York Times; 11-12: The Progressive Review; 13-15: Commerce Department survey; 16-18: Black Filmmakers Coalition; 19-23: Urban Quality Indicators; 24: Project Censored: The Ten Most Unreported Stories of 1997

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